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Prologue

It was around a decade back, when I was working in Bhubaneswar, a place that is home to some of the most ancient temples in India, gateway to Konark's Sun Temple and Puri Jagannath Temple. And close by is Dhauli, the place where the Kalinga battle was fought and the conversion of Emperor Ashoka from a warrior to a pacifist took place. During a break in an otherwise hectic schedule, was just having a talk with one of my colleagues, on the places I had visited around, and their significance. My colleague, who was from Odisha himself, explained more in detail, about the historical significance of those places. And what he said in his own words, really struck me "You know it is like **History Under your Feet**, you are standing on a place, and that could well be the site of some historical event or other".

History Under your feet, yeah that term just stuck in my mind, and it was true in a way. Every place in India, even the smallest village, has some history or other connected to it, dating centuries back. It may not be too well known, but as you dig deeper, you find that there is a connect somewhere or other. You see it sometimes explicitly, you do not see it sometimes, but you feel it, that sense of history when you pass through a place.

Well personally I had a fascination for history, since I was a kid, don't ask me why, just loved listening to the tales of great kings of yore, the battles they fought, the empires they built. And the love for history was further whetted by Amar Chitra Katha comics, and those mini encyclopedias, "Do you know" books. While I started with Indian history, my interest veered towards world history too, and that is where I began to read about World War II, American Civil War, French Revolution, Arab-Israel wars, Cold War etc. I was fortunate to have some really good history teachers at school, which whetted my appetite for it, with their narration. Of course as I went to higher classes, I had to deal with teachers who made it sound the most boring subject, just rattling off a series of dates and facts.

And this I feel has been the issue with the way History is taught in schools, students are just made to cram dates and some facts, there is absolutely no connect with the topic. This is the reason why History has become a boring and dry subject for many, and add to that, a feeling that it really has no value whatsoever. I can't blame people either, like many others I had to do

engineering, even though my passion was history, as there were really no opportunities during my time in it.

Though I joined engineering, my passion for history was still alive, and I never lost an opportunity to keep reading and learning, mostly on my own. It helped that I was a regular quizzier in college, and that in a way, helped me to keep touch with history too.

Later on when I was preparing for Civil Services, I had no second thoughts in taking History as my subject, and this time I was in closer touch. It was during this period, I learnt more about Indian history, and in much detail, from the Mughals to the Marathas, from the Vijayanagar Empire to the Cholas and Chalukyas, learnt a good deal. While I could not make it through the Civils, that learning experience on Indian History was valuable. In due course of time, like any others, I got into the IT field, but my passion for history was still intact.

What I found was that many of us were totally ignorant about Indian history, or aware of only some parts of it. I really don't blame people, it is the way history has been taught in schools that is the culprit. Most of our history books, have an excessive focus on the Mughals, the British Raj, and when it comes to freedom struggle, it is only Gandhi-Nehru all the way. Vijayanagar Empire, one of the greatest kingdoms down South, gets hardly 2-3 pages, even though its reign has been praised as a Golden Age. How many history books deal with the Naval Warfare of the Chola dynasty? Or the Ahoms in North East, who reigned over a large area, and effectively checked the Mughal advances? How many are aware that there is a Great Wall of India, which was erected by Rana Kumbha, to keep out invaders? Even in freedom struggle, not much space is given to revolutionaries like the Chapekar Brothers, Bagha Jatin or the numerous freedom movements down South.

We could go on ranting about the way history is taught in schools, but that will achieve pretty little. We are the ones who need to start bringing out that part of the history, which is not too well known to many. Through blogs, through web sites, through our own alternative media. It is not an easy task for sure, unlike in the West, where amateur historians have their own voice and space, in India, the establishment is notoriously snobbish about them. But

then the entrenched establishment will always find it difficult to accept a challenge to the status quo. That should not really put us down, as we make our own effort, to spread our views and get our voice heard.

One thing we need to remember, History is not just about kings, kingdoms and battles, it is also about building institutions, laws and Governments. It is not about just the victories of war, it is also about the evolution of arts, culture, heritage and literature. The evolution of the Internet is as much a part of history as is the establishment of any great empire. The making of India's constitution is as much a part of history as its freedoms struggle is. Basically when you touch upon history, you in effect are studying every possible subject out there-philosophy, war, science, architecture, exploration, culture, music, and arts. History should never be a dull recollection of something that has happened in the past, it should be a vibrant narration that connects the past with the present, and also makes us think of the future.

It was this passion and the discussions I had been having on social media, with regards to history, or more specifically Indian history that motivated me to start my history blog, <http://historyunderyourfeet.wordpress.com>. And the blog has been quite a success. However, in India blogs still have a limited reach, and that is when I felt it would be better to compile the history posts on the blog into a book, that would reach more people, and also have a longer lasting value. This is not a comprehensive account of Indian history nor a scholarly work, but my views on Indian history, of some famous places I have been to, of great persons, and of some important events.

Shivaji- The Ruler

Shivaji has rightly been regarded as one of the finest warriors, a great general, a brilliant strategist and a renowned exponent of guerrilla warfare. His role in raising a dynasty and an independent kingdom, during the reign of the Mughals, and the way he gave nightmares to Aurangzeb has been the stuff of heroism and legend. For someone who spent the better time of his life, fighting to build and preserve his empire, and who really had not much formal education, Shivaji built in quite a robust administration and taxation system. As quoted by Rawlinson

“Like nearly all great warriors-Napoleon is a conspicuous example-Shivaji was also a great administrator, for the qualities which go to make a capable general are those which are required by the successful organizer and statesman”.[\[1\]](#)

Shivaji was an autocrat like any other ruler of his time, he however ensured that he did not misuse the great power vested in him. He had a council of 8 ministers, the Ashta Pradhan who assisted and was a kind of advisory council. They comprised the following.

1. Peshwa- Prime Minister, who looked after the overall welfare of the people and the state.
2. Amatya- Finance Minister, who looked after all the public accounts of the kingdom and some districts.
3. Mantri or Wakiya Nawis- Chronicler who kept a daily account of what was happening in the court.
4. Samant/Dabir- Foreign Secretary who advised the king on all matters of war and peace, and those relating to foreign states. Also receiving foreign

Ambassadors and envoys.

5. Sachiv- Home Secretary, who handled the king's correspondence, ensuring all royal orders were in proper style. Also checked the accounts of the Parganas.

6. Pandit Rao- Equivalent to Muhtasib, the religious head, whose duty was to fix dates for religious ceremonies, oversee public morals and interpret religious laws,

7. Nyayadish-Chief Justice responsible for civil and military justice.

8. Senapati- Commander in chief, who oversaw the recruitment and organization of the Army.

Barring Nyayadish and Senapati, all the other ministers were to lead military expeditions and command armies.

Shivaji also did away with the practice of granting Jagirs to officers, and instead all were paid in cash. Even when officials had to do revenue collection, their only responsibility was collection, and beyond that they had no control over the money. The kingdom was divided into 4 provinces, and there was a Viceroy in charge of each. These provinces in turn had a number of sub divisions, called pranth.

Local Government.

The kingdom was divided into 4 provinces, each had a Viceroy, and these provinces were in turn divided into Pranth. Jagirdari system was abolished, and officers were paid in cash. No office was hereditary, officers were appointed on merit, and they were solely responsible for revenue collection.

Revenue

Shivaji did away with the existing system of taxing the farmers, through the Zamindars or Deshmukhs. The Government would deal directly with cultivators and land was surveyed using a measuring rod called the Kathi. The state's share was initially 30% of produce, though it was increased to 40% later on. The farmer could pay the amount either in cash or kind. Similarly for territories occupied by Shivaji, outside the Maratha region, two taxes were levied, Chauth which was 1/4th of the territory's income, and Sardeshmukhi which was an additional 10% levy on the chauth, as a tribute to the ruler. During times of famine, the Govt paid money or grain in advance to

cultivators, that could be paid back later in installments. Revenue collection was strictly carried out, leaving no scope for discretion or favoritism.

Military

Till the advent of the Shivaji, the Marathas generally had an army made of irregulars, most of them essentially farmers who fought during the dry season. It was Shivaji who came up with a regular, professional army, where the soldiers were paid in cash throughout the year. The army was constituted into units, and grades were given regularly. Each unit consisting of 25 troopers reported to a Havaladar, who in turn reported a Jumladar, and there was a chain of command, Jumladar- Hazari-Sari Naubat. The state maintained a standing army called the paga. All the war horses belonged to the state, and they had to be maintained well.

The infantry was divided again into regiments, brigades, divisions, and both Hindus, Muslims were recruited without any discrimination. As forts played a vital role in the defense, they were well maintained, garrisons were selected carefully, and they had the Havaladar, Sabnis overseeing them. The forts were pretty much utilitarian in their design, with no ornate palaces or gardens, no temple complexes, and all the ranks had the same form of accommodation.

Women, female slaves, dancing girls were not permitted into the army, to maintain discipline of ranks. Even during military campaigns, ground rules were laid down, women, children, elderly and infirm people would not be harassed. No women of the enemy would be taken as slaves, and if captured, she would be sent back with due respect. Valuables that were taken during military raid, were strictly the property of the state treasury, and should not be used for personal benefit.

There were also part time soldiers, primarily peasants who supported in wars for 4 months during which time they were actually paid. With Shivaji's emphasis on commando tactics, cavalry and infantry was made as mobile and light as possible. There was a centralized intelligence department with Bahrijee Nayak as the chief spy to keep track of the enemy movements.

Navy

Shivaji was one of the few rulers who realized the importance of a strong Navy in protecting the Konkan coast from pirates, and also not being dependent on the English, Dutch and Portugese. Naval forts were built at Vijaydurg, Sindhudurg,Jaigad etc, while docks for repair of naval vessels were set up at Ratnagiri. He had 4 different kind of war ships-Gurabs, Gallibats,Pals and Manjuhas.And also maintained a large merchant navy for trade purposes. He also built up a strong Navy fleet stationed at Colaba.

Shivaji is well known for his military exploits and heroism, but not really is much known about his administration, the way he built up a professional army, his role in building a navy, so yes on those aspects he is quite underrated.[\[2\]](#)

The Capture of Sinhgad.



One of the greatest military operations in the history of India, would be the capture of Sinhagad . It is a story of courage, heroism, adventure. When you walk around Pune , and the surrounding areas, you feel the valor of the Marathas at every step. Pune itself home of the Peshwas, Raigad where Shivaji was coronated, Purandhar, Pratapgarh , all those names resonate with the glory of one of India's greatest sons. A man who gave sleepless nights to Aurangzeb, yet respected Hindus and Muslims equally. But it is Sinhagad , which takes your breath away, with its sheer grandeur, and of course one of the most soul stirring tales behind it. Sinhagad was originally called as Kondhana , and is located around 12 miles from Pune. Located on the eastern side of the great Sahayadri range, it is connected to Purandar on the east and west by very high ridges, and on the north and south, there is a huge rugged mountain with a sheer vertical drop. The fort is located on the mountain, and it has a strong wall, flanked by towers. The only entrance to the fort is by the gates. Shivaji was forced to surrender this fort to Raja Jai Singh, by the Treaty of Purandar , and the fort passed into the hands of the Mughals. Raja Jai Singh's brother Uday Bhan , now looked after the fort, and it had a huge garrison of Mughal, Rajput and Pathan soldiers. Jijabai, Shivaji' s mother, was not able to digest the loss of this fort, Maharashtra's pride. She demanded the fort as a gift to her. Shivaji was not very enthusiastic, because of the hazards in accessing the fort, as well as the fact that Uday Bhan was an

able commander himself. But he gave in to his mother's request, and he called his childhood friend, and one of his ablest men, Tanaji Malusare , for the mission.

Shivaji had the faith in Tanaji , a giant of a man, and a fiercely loyal general. But the mission was hazardous in the extreme, the cliffs on which this fort is located, are absolutely steep, and an attack in dark is really dangerous. The doors and gates were heavily guarded, and the fort itself had a strong garrison. And Uday Bhan was a man of no mean abilities, a true Rajput himself. Tanaji did a survey of the area, and found that the only way to get into the fort, was from the South side, as it was the least guarded. The southern flank was on the top of a huge cliff, and it was assumed that no one could really scale it. Once he was sure of his strategy, he gathered 1000 Mavals(Maratha soldiers) and attacked in the darkness of night. The point of access chosen was the South Western gorge, which had the least security. Once, Tanaji and his men broke into the fort, the doors would be thrown open, following which another contingent of Maratha soldiers would attack .

Now came the toughest part, climbing the huge cliff. And this is where Tanaji pulled off the master stroke. Humans could not climb the cliff, but ghorpad(Marathi for monitor lizards) could. Tanaji took Shivaji' s pet ghorpad, Yaswanthi , tied a rope around its waist, and bade it to run up the cliff. As the lizard, raced to the top, it was able to secure a foothold on the cliff, thanks to its talons. The Marathas led by Tanaji clambered up the hill, and soon they let down the ropes for others to follow. As they entered the fort, a commotion caused the garrison to wake up. Though the Marathas were outnumbered by the 1000 strong garrison consisting of Arabs, Afghans, Rajputs and Pathans , they fought like cornered tigers. Tanaji, leading the fray like a man possessed, slaughtering everyone who came in his way. As the garrison soldiers fled before Tanaji's furious onslaught, Uday Bhan himself entered the fray, and time stood still, as these two great warriors fought furiously, like two lions, but finally, Tanaji was wounded fatally around the waist, and he fell. Just when it seemed all was lost, Tanaji's brother appeared with reserves, and the Marathas shouting "Har Har Mahadev" fell upon the garrison with a fierce onslaught. So furious was the assault, that many of the defending soldiers, tried to save themselves by jumping over the walls, and fell to their

death on the rocks. Uday Bhan , the great Rajput warrior, died like a hero, fighting till the last breath to defend the fort. When Shivaji, came to the fort, he refused to celebrate the capture, seeing his closest friend, and ablest general, lying dead. He broke down saying “Gad Aala, Pan Sinha Gela” , meaning “I have won the Fort, but lost the lion”.

The fort can be reached from Pune , and though it is not very properly maintained, it needs to be watched for the sheer majestic grandeur of the Sahayadri ranges around it. Stand on the walls and as you recall, the Maratha soldiers climbing in the pitch darkness of the night, over the cliffs, a chill runs up your spine. It is sad, that a fort, which has been witness to one of the greatest military operations the world has seen, should lie in a state of criminal neglect. As you walk around and see graffiti scribbled, you wonder when we will learn to respect our history and heritage. But all such feelings vanish, when you come across the bust of Tanaji. As you watch this great man, and recall his valor, loyalty and courage, you feel a sense of pride and joy. Tanaji was truly a lion. Probably this could be the reason, that NDA cadets, take their most grueling hike ,from Khadakavalsa to Sinhagad fort. Every cadet who passes out from the NDA, proudly recalls, his climb to Sinhagad. It is fighting that the spirit of a man who carried out one of the most brilliant and daring military operation, and an emperor, who was acknowledged as a military genius, should inspire our brave men, who guard our borders day in and day out. Lokamanya Tilak stayed here for some time, while Gandhiji is said to have asked water from this place, whenever he was in Pune.

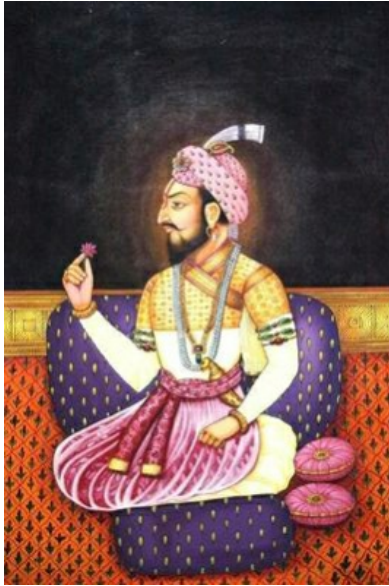
Chattrapati Sambhaji

*Mrutyuche aavhaan peluni, toch varasa aamhaala dila l
Shivrayaancha Shambhu chaava, Hindu mhanuni amar jahala ll
(Coming from the same legacy that confronted death,
Shivaji's son Shambhu, became immortal as a Hindu)*

Quite often, growing up in the shadow of a banyan tree can be quite inhibiting, however much you grow, and you shall always look small against the banyan. In a sense that was what happened to Sambhaji, the son of Sivaji. Growing up in the shadow of a powerful father, who was a giant of a personality, meant Sambhaji, for all his achievements would never really match up to Sivaji. Add to it, his own addiction to sensual pleasures and drink, meant historians often judged him rather harshly compared to his father. One more reason why Sambhaji was often harshly judged by historians was his rather rash behavior that alienated some of the more powerful Maratha clans. In a sense Sambhaji had to bear the burden of his father's legacy, and his own reckless attitude, it did not help either, that there was no love lost between him and his father. But it would be unfair to dismiss Sambhaji's contribution to the Maratha Empire, in his own way he strengthened it, and carried on the good work of his father.

1. It was not an easy childhood for Sambhaji, born to Sivaji's first wife Saibai, whom he also loved the most. He lost his mother at the age of 2, and grew up in the care of his grandmother Jijabai. When he was just 9, he was forced to live with Raja Jai Singh of Amber as a hostage, following the Treaty of Purandar, which Sivaji had signed in 1656. For some time, Sambhaji had to serve in the Mughal Court under Aurangzeb, and on May 1666, he was placed under house arrest along with his father. They managed to escape, hoodwinking the guards, hiding in fruit baskets. Sambhaji was married to Jivabai, the daughter of Pilajirao Shirke, a powerful deshmukh of the Konkan region, and she changed her name to Yesubai after marriage. It was more of a political alliance, with the marriage giving Sivaji access to the entire Konkan region. However Sivaji never really got along with

his son and for some time Sambhaji was put under surveillance in Panhala Fort to curb his irresponsible behavior. Sambhaji escaped from there, and for some time, served with the Mughals before coming back to the Maratha camp.[\[3\]](#)



Sivaji passed away in 1680 leading to a bitter struggle for the accession to the throne. Sambhaji's step mother Soyrabai, wanted her son Rajaram to be the next ruler, and she connived with various Maratha nobles to install him on throne. Sambhaji escaped from Panhala, and overthrow Rajaram, after taking control of both Panhala and Raigad forts. He was formally crowned the emperor on July 20, 1680 and threw Rajaram, Soyrabai along with Rajaram's wife Jankibai into prison. He got Soyrabai executed on charges of treason and conspiracy, thus consolidating his hold on the throne.

One of Sambhaji's first campaigns was against Burhanpur (currently in Madhya Pradesh), and a stronghold of the Mughals. Known for its riches as also its grand buildings, Burhanpur was an obvious target for the Marathas. Bahadur Khan Kokaltash, Aurangzeb's relative was the one in charge of Burhanpur, and Sambhaji tricked him into thinking that they would attack Surat. The tactic worked, the Marathas under the command of Hambirrao Mohite, attacked Burhanpur, and soon the city was captured, the treasury was looted, and the captives were executed.

In 1681, Sambhaji gave shelter to Aurangzeb's rebellious son Prince Akbar, it would lead to one of the longest wars in Indian history between the

Marathas and Mughals. Aurangzeb already furious over Sivaji checking his advances in the Deccan, now swore to destroy the Marathas forever. After camping in Aurangabad, the Mughal Headquarters in the Deccan, Aurangzeb turned his attention to the Marathas. One of the first forts to be attacked was Ramsej, in Nasik district, a rather tiny fort but strategically important.

Aurangzeb felt that being one of the smaller forts, this would be captured easily but a 5 month long siege, failed, with fierce resistance from the Marathas, and the Mughal army had to retreat. Aurangzeb was able to overcome Bijapur and Golkonda, bringing to an end the Adilshahi and Qutubshahi Empires there and also got two great generals Murrabkhan and Sarjakhan.

One of Sambhaji's failed campaigns though would be against the Siddis of Janjira, against whom he led a 30 day siege in 1682.[\[4\]](#) It was a fort even his father failed to capture in spite of an intense campaign. Though Janjira was subjected to attack and suffered heavy damages, the Marathas could not penetrate the fort. Sambhaji attempted a Trojan horse style trick, sending in his own men as defectors, however the plot was discovered, and the infiltrators executed. Sambhaji attempted to build a stone causeway to the island, but had to give it up when Aurangzeb attacked Raigad, forcing him to retreat. Sambhaji however managed to capture the Portuguese held fort of Anjadiva but the Marathas were later repelled by a 200 strong force. This led to another ongoing conflict between the Marathas and Portuguese who at that time, were allowing the Mughals to use their ports as also, provided regular supplies to them. In late 1683, Sambhaji attacked the Portuguese, and captured many key forts, forcing the then Viceroy, Francisco De Tavora to undertake special prayers in the cathedral of St. Francis of Xavier. However a joint attack by Mughals and Portuguese forced Sambhaji to withdraw from Goa.



Sambhaji later had a treaty with the British, which enabled him to conquer, Pratapgadh and a series of forts along the Western Ghats. His attempt to invade Mysore in 1681 would however end in failure much like that of his father's earlier, when the ruler Chikkadevaraja Wodeyar, managed to repel back his army. Chikkadevaraja later allied with the Mughals, and violated the treaties he had earlier signed with the Marathas. The Battle of Wai in 1687 would be one of the biggest blows to Sambhaji, he lost his trusted commander Hambirao Mohite, and troops deserted him in large numbers. It was a shattering defeat for Sambhaji, and to make matters worse, the Shirke clan who had defected to the Mughal side, spied on his movements, as he was on the run. [5]

Sambhaji was taken prisoner by the Mughals under Muqqarab Khan in February 1689, along with his friend Kavi Kalash. Taken to Tulapur, Sambhaji along with Kavi Kalash, was humiliated in the worst possible manner, by Aurangzeb, first they were made to dress like jokers, insulted, paraded in chains and laughed at. Aurangzeb promised amnesty to Sambhaji if he converted to Islam, and surrender his forts, the latter refused. Following which Sambhaji was tortured to death in the most gruesome manner. His skin was peeled off using the Bagh Nakh(tiger claws), he was blinded, his tongue was plucked out and nails pulled out. Finally on March 11, 1689, Sambhaji was executed, by beheading him at Tulapur and his body thrown into the Bhima River.[6]

It was the end of a great ruler, who never really received his due from history. The fact is that Sambaji had managed to keep the Maratha Empire intact, and carried on with most of his father's policies. His death threw the empire into a period of chaos and confusion, and it was only the ascent of Chattrapati

Shahu, Sambhaji's son that bought it back to glory.

The Holkars of Indore-Malhar Rao Holkar

“Two pearls have been dissolved, 27 gold coins have been lost and of the silver and copper the total cannot be cast up”- Message to Balaji Baji Rao after Panipat[\[7\]](#)

The 3rd Battle of Panipat, had dealt one of the worst blows ever to the Maratha empire, Balaji Baji Rao, the Peshwa, could not recover from the debacle and died broken hearted in the very city of Pune that he so lovingly built. The Marathas lost the entire Northern territories of India from Delhi onwards, and the empire ran up into huge debts. It was at such a critical juncture that Madhavrao I, became the Peshwa on June 23, 1761, at a very young age of 16. Due to his rather young age, his uncle Raghunathrao was appointed as his regent to assist him in the administrative affairs. Madhavrao I managed to bring the administration back into track, and also secured the treasury that was being looted. He had the unenviable task of rebuilding the Maratha Empire that had suffered a body blow, after Panipat and setting right the rot in the administration. Madhavrao I's reign however would be remembered for the creation of the semi-autonomous Maratha states in the Deccan and the North, it was a tactical decision to keep the Maratha empire intact.

While the Peshwas ruled over Pune, in the Western part of India, Pilaji Rao Gaekwad captured Baroda from the Mughals in 1721, leading to the establishment of the Gaekwad dynasty there. The Peshwa authority by now had considerably eroded post Panipat, and the semi-autonomous dynasties like the Gaekwads began to assert themselves even more. In Central India, Ranoji Scindia, a patil from Satara district, commanded the Maratha invasion of Malwa, under Peshwa Baji Rao and became subedar of the province in 1736.

He established his own capital at Ujjain in 1731, and later in 1810 moved to Gwalior, which would be the seat of the Scindia dynasty. In Maharashtra itself, the Bhonsle's established semi-autonomous fiefs at Nagpur, Satara and Kolhapur, while smaller semi-autonomous provinces like Dhar, Sangli,

Aundh etc sprang up.



The Holkars^[8] were technically not Marathas, they were primarily Dhangars, a community of shepherds and cattle herders , predominantly found in Maharashtra. It is believed they were originally from Gokul near Mathura, and later migrated into Mewar, from where they spread into Gujarat and Maharashtra. They were known for their poetry called Ovi, which was inspired by the pastures and forests where their flocks grazed. Their patron deity was Biroba, a form of Lord Shiva, and the Dhangari Gaja dance in his honor is pretty well known.



In the village of Hol, close to Jejuri(now in Pune district), Malhar Rao Holkar was born, in 1693. Growing up at Taloda(now in Nandurbar dt), he belonged to the Raj Pali clan of the Dhangars, a form of Royal Shepherd, one of the higher rated clans. One of his wives was Bana Bai Sahib Holkar, a

Khanda Rani, so called, as he had sent his sword to represent him at their wedding, due to her status as a Rajput princess.

Like most others, Malhar Rao Holkar served for some time under the local Sardar, Kadam Bande, and took part in the military campaigns of Peshwa Balaji Vishwanath in 1719. Post Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the Mughal empire started to slide into decline, and the actual power remained with the Sayyid brothers, Hussain Ali Khan and Abdullah Ali Khan, the so called king makers. Hussain Ali Khan, weary of the constant Maratha attacks in the Deccan, sought to make peace with them, and in 1718, Balaji negotiated a treaty with them, by which the Marathas would have the right to chauth and sardeshmukhi in the old Mughal provinces of the Deccan. As well as Gujarat, Khandesh and returning Shivaji's Maharaj's territories in Karnataka. Farrukhshiyar, the Mughal emperor refused to ratify the treaty, and attempted to get rid of the Sayyid brothers, who however having got wind of the news, organized a rebellion along with the Marathas.



Foundation of Indore State

Indore was initially a part of the Kampel pargana during the Mughal empire, under the Malwa Subah and administered from Ujjain. It was first developed by zamindar Rao Nand Lal Chaudhary and was believed to have got its name from the Lord Indreshwar Temple there. Nandlal was quite influential during the Mughal reign, and was given sanads by both Aurangzeb and later Farrukhshiyar, as well as a special gold Langar from his friend Jai Singh II. The modern day settlement was founded during the mid-1710s, when Nandlal built the Sree Sansthan Bada Rawla, to offer his people a sanctuary from the continuous warring between the Maratha and Mughal rulers.

Lying on the Delhi-Deccan route, Indore also grew into importance as a

trading center. In 1724, the Nizam accepted the rights of the Marathas to levy chauth in this area, and by 1733, the Marathas had full control of the Malwa region. Nandlal Chaudhary accepted the Maratha rule, and also retained the right to perform the first Dussehra Puja before the Holkar rulers. Indore state was founded on July 29, 1732 when Baji Rao granted Malhar Rao Holkar the 28 and half parganas in Malwa. He also started the construction of the Rajwada in Indore, a mix of Maratha and Mughal styles, famous for its chhatris.

Kingmaker of North.

In 1718, Balaji Viswanath, sent a massive Maratha army to Delhi, in which Malhar Rao Holkar played a major role. Delhi was overcome by the Marathas, after some determined resistance, Farrukhsiyar was captured, deposed and blinded by the Sayyid brothers. It would be one of the greatest triumphs in Maratha history. In 1720, Malhar Rao Holkar again played a major role in the Battle of Balapur against the Nizam in 1721 and later served under the Raja of Barwani, a former princely state now in Madhya Pradesh.

Having tired of now leading the life of a mercenary, Malhar Rao, now joined the Peshwa Baji Rao's army and by the dint of his hard work, moved up in the ranks. He was one of Baji Rao's trusted commanders, and fought in various important campaigns.

Let us transcend the barren Deccan and conquer central India. The Mughals have become weak indolent womanizers and opium-addicts. The accumulated wealth of centuries in the vaults of the north, can be ours. It is time to drive from the holy land of Bharatvarsha the outcaste and the barbarian. Let us throw them back over the Himalayas, back to where they came from. The Maratha flag must fly from the Krishna to the Indus. Hindustan is ours- Peshwa Baji Rao.[\[9\]](#)

Malhar Rao had earlier played a role in settling a dispute in Bhopal, thus winning Baji Rao's confidence even more. Soon he was commanding a force of 500 and by 1727 he was overseeing troops in the Malwa region. One of his greatest achievements was during the Battle of Palkhed in 1728, where the Marathas inflicted a crushing defeat on the Nizam. The genesis of this battle lay in the Nizam Asaf Jah I, using Sambhaji II of Kolhapur as a counter against Baji Rao I, to expand his empire, as well as to cut down his influence.

Malhar Rao played a major role in cutting down the supplies and communications of the Nizam's army, giving the Marathas a strategic advantage. And soon at Palkhed, the Nizam found himself cornered, by the Marathas, and suffered a humiliating rout. By 1732, Malhar Rao Holkar was commanding a large part of the Malwa region, primarily Western Malwa, and a cavalry force of several 1000 men.



He never looked back after this, defeating the forces of the Nizam at Tal Bhopal in 1739, and later conquering the fort of Bassein(now Vasai) from the Portuguese after a long drawn out siege under the leadership of Chimaji Appa. He also received the villages of Rampura, Bhanpura and Tonk from Madhosingh I of Jaipur for the assistance he rendered to him in 1743, during his internal disputes with Ishwari Singh. For his gallantry in the Rohilla campaign of 1748, he was granted an Imperial Sardeshmukhi and by now Malhar Rao Holkar was the undisputed master of Western Malwa. Lording over Malwa, playing a kingmaker in North and Central India, Malhar Rao Holkar was now the master of a huge territory lying between the Narmada and Sahyadris.

Holkar also played a significant role in the North, too, especially in the disputes between various rulers, one of the more important ones being the Battle of Farukhabad during 1751-52, where along with Jayappa Scindia, Gangadhar Tatya, aided the Safdarjung the Nawab of Oudh, against a combined force of Shadullah Khan, Bahadur Khan Rohilla and Ahmed Khan Bangash. Safdarjang was originally the Grand Vizier in the Mughal court, whose increasing popularity led to an assassination attempt on his life in 1749. This only exacerbated tensions with the Imperial Afghan faction of the

Mughal court, particularly Javed Khan Nawab, who was the regent of the emperor Ahmad Shah. Ahmed Khan Bangash launched an attack on Safdarjung's possessions in Oudh, wounding him, and this made Safdarjung launch an all-out attack on him. The enmity between Safdarjung on one side and the Rohillas, Bangash on other side, saw him retreat to Oudh from where he ruled. Safdarjung in turn made a treaty with the Marathas who in turn would assist him in his fight against the Rohillas and Bangash.



Tragedy however struck Malhar Rao Holkar during the siege of Kumher Fort(now in Bharatpur dt, Rajasthan), in 1754 AD. During the siege that lasted 4 months, Malhar Rao's son Khanderao Holkar one day was inspecting the troops outside the fort, when an open cannonball hit him, killing him on the spot. A grief stricken Malhar Rao swore revenge on the Jat ruler, Suraj Mal, and besieged Kumher, vowing not to return, until Suraj Mal was killed, and Kumher destroyed. However Maharani Kishori advised an increasingly isolated Suraj Mal not to worry, and started diplomatic efforts through Diwan Roop Ram Kataria. Taking advantage of the differences between Malhar Rao and Jayappa Scindia, she sought the latter's assistance to Suraj Mal in the event of Malhar Rao attacking him. Scindia assured Suraj Mal of his assistance, and then contacted the Peshwa Ragunathrao who in turn advised Holkar to make peace with the Jat ruler.

In 1757, along with Raghunath Rao and the Mughal Wazir Imad Mulk, laid siege to Delhi that was under the control of Najib-Ud-Doulah, the Rohilla leader who effectively controlled it after Ahmed Shah Abdali installed the puppet ruler Alamgir II. Leading a force of 100,000 Marathas, Malhar Rao first crushed the Afghans in the Doab region. Soon a force of 30,000

Marathas, encamped outside Delhi, and after a 2 week long siege Najib, surrendered and was taken prisoner by the Marathas. This also made the Marathas the de facto rulers of Delhi, and Alamgir II, just remained a titular head with no real powers. Using Delhi as the base Malhar Rao, also captured Sirhind in 1758 and later Lahore too fell, while Tukoji Rao Holkar conquered Attock. The promise made by Baji Rao to fly the Maratha flag at Delhi and Attock was fulfilled. Malhar Rao passed away in 1766, and his daughter in law Ahilyabai Holkar took over and would prove herself to be one of the greatest queens of India.

Holkars of Indore- Ahilyabai Holkar

*For thirty years her reign of peace,
The land in blessing did increase;
And she was blessed by every tongue,
By stern and gentle, old and young.
Yea, even the children at their mothers feet-Joanna Baillie[\[10\]](#)*



The history of India has its own share of great women, throughout the ages who played a significant role as rulers, poets, warriors. Be it the Gond Queen Rani Durgavati who defied the mighty Mughal army of Emperor Akbar, or the brave Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi who fought against the British their deeds were a part of folklore and history. In such an illustrious pantheon, there was Ahilyabai Holkar, the daughter in law of Malhar Rao Holkar, the founder of the Holkar kingdom. Widowed at a young age, took over as queen, she takes her place in history among other great queens like Catherine II of Russia, Elizabeth I of England and Margaret I of Denmark. Known for her wisdom and administrative ability she rebuilt many Hindu temples, offered facilities for pilgrims, and built a new capital at Maheswar on the banks of the Narmada.[\[11\]](#)

On the 31st of May, 1725, Ahilyabai was born in the Ahmednagar district of Maharashtra to a Dhargar village patil Malkoji Shinde. Though she did not go to school, nevertheless her father taught her to read and write at home. Fortune unexpectedly came her way, when the ruler of Malwa, Malhar Rao Holkar stopped at her village on his way to Pune and saw the 8 year old girl at a temple. Impressed by her piety, he took her home as a bride for his son Khande Rao. Married in 1733, tragedy struck Ahilyabai when her husband

was killed in the Siege of Kumher fort by a cannonball. It's believed a grief stricken Ahilyabai wanted to commit Sati, but her father in law dissuaded her, saying she was needed more than ever now, as there was no male heir, and only she could take care of the kingdom. Malhar Rao trained Ahilyabai in administrative and military matters, he had full faith in her ability and she did not let him down.

Proceed to Gwalior after crossing the Chambal. You may halt there for four or five days. You should keep your big artillery and arrange for its ammunition as much as possible....On the march you should arrange for military posts being located for protection of the road.

An excerpt from a letter that illustrates Malhar Rao's faith in Ahilyabai, in one of the most tumultuous period of Indian history. Malhar Rao passed away in 1766, and though her son Malerao took over he was too weak a ruler and passed away the very next year.

She petitioned the Peshwa to take over the reign of Malwa herself, as she had been trained in military and administration by then. Though some of the nobles objected to this, she had the full support of the Holkar army. On many occasions Ahilyabai had led the army herself from the front armed with bows and arrows on her elephant. The Peshwa granted her permission to rule in 1767, and she was ably assisted by Tukojirao Holkar, the commander in chief of the army and her adopted son too in a way. With Tukojirao advising her on military matters, Ahilyabai proceeded to rule over Malwa in a wise and sagacious manner. She never let personal rivalries affect her administration, once reinstated a Brahmin who had opposed her earlier. She never observed purdah, held daily durbars and was always accessible to the public.

"Her first principle of government appears to have been moderate assessment, and an almost sacred respect for the native rights of village officers and proprietors of land. She heard every complaint in person; and although she continually referred cases to courts of equity and arbitration, and to her ministers for settlement, she was always accessible. So strong was her sense of duty on all points connected with the distribution of justice, that she is represented as not only patient but unwearied in the investigation of the most insignificant cases, when appeals were made to her decision." – Sir John Malcolm.[\[12\]](#)

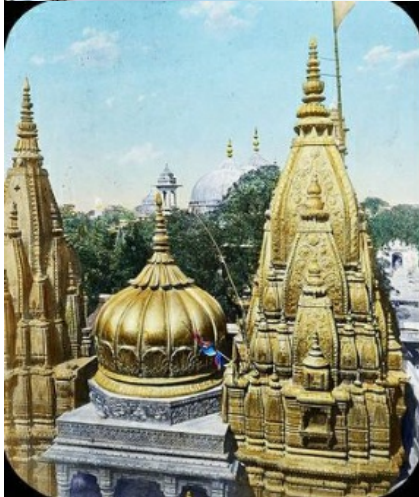
Ahilyabai ruled at a time, when the whole of Central India, Maharashtra, was facing power struggles one way or another, as well as intense battles being fought for the throne. It was to her credit, that during her 30 year long reign, Malwa was never once attacked and remained an oasis of stability and peace. While Indore developed under Ahilyabhai's reign, into a prosperous trading town, she also developed her own capital at Maheswar on the banks of the Narmada.

She built many temples at Maheswar, a fort, a palace, repaired many ghats. She also built many forts, roads in Malwa, donated to temples and sponsored many Hindu festivals. She also built many temples, ghats, wells, tanks outside Malwa too all over India. Maheswar during her time, turned out to be a center for literature and arts. The famous Marathi poet Moropant, the shahir Anantapandhi was patronized by her as well as the Sanskrit scholar Khushali Ram. The textile industry flourished in Maheshwar during her reign, and the city is home to the famous Maheshwari sari. She also patronized many craftsmen, sculptors, artistes who made the city their home. Trade was encouraged in the kingdom, and many merchants, farmers, cultivators rose to affluence during her time.



Ahilyabai treated her subjects like her own children, and invested a lot of money in public works. Trees were planted along roads, wells were dug and rest houses set up for travelers. She reached out to the poor and homeless, gave them shelter and dignity.

When the Bhils were harassing the caravans she talked out with them, persuaded them to give up their nomadic lifestyle granted them land for cultivation. Her daily routine was quite simple, rose an hour before daybreak to say her prayers, read the scriptures, and distributed alms to Brahmins. After breakfast, she took a short break, and then attended durbar listening to people, settling disputes, taking decisions on administrative matters. A devout Shaivaite, she would mark Shri Shankara on all royal proclamations along with her signature.



While Ahilyabai built and also repaired many temples all over India, some of her more famous works are rebuilding the Kashi Viswanath temple after it

was destroyed by Aurangzeb, there is also an Ahilya Ghat at Varanasi as well as the Ahilya Dwarkeswar temple. Apart from that she also repaired the Manikarnika, Dasasvamedh Ghats, built Dharamshalas there.



The Chatri of her father in law Malhar Rao Holkar was built at Alampur in MP as well as many temples here. Also built the Treta Ram temple in Ayodhya. From Badrinath to Dwarka, from Omkareswar to Puri, from Gaya to Rameswaram, every holy pilgrimage site in India, had a contribution in one way or other from Ahilyabhai Holkar be it temples, ghats, dharamshalas, sponsoring of poojas, she did a yeoman service to the cause of Hinduism. On 13th August 1795 Ahilyabai Holkar passed away, but her legacy would remain forever, in the form of temples, public works, chattris, dharamshalas. At every major pilgrimage center in India, you would find some memory or other of her work.

Veer Chhatrasal- The Lion of Bundelkhand



Bundelkhand a region lying between the Indo-Gangetic plain and the Vindhya, marked by hills, valleys, sparse vegetation and rocky outcrops. A region known for its harsh climate, aridity and barren spaces, an environment that has produced some of the hardest warriors and rulers of India. The Chandela Rajputs who built the stunning temples at Khajuraho, Rudra Pratap Singh, who founded the princely state of Orchha, and is famous for the magnificent buildings and above all the brave Rani Laxmibai of Jhansi whom the British regarded as one of the most dangerous rebels during the 1857 War of Independence.



Orcha



Fort of Jhansi(above) and Khajuraho(below)

In modern times, the hockey wizard Dhyan Chand, the great Hindi poet Maithili Sharan Gupta, prominent Hindi movie lyricist Indeevar, novelist Vrindavan Lal Verma, all hailed from here.

In the pantheon of greats from Bundelkhand[\[13\]](#), one man's name shone like a beacon of light, Veer Chhatrasal. History is a chronicle of struggles for the sake of power, but in that there have been people who fought not just for power, but also for freedom. And such men and women have been immortalized as brave hearts. In Medieval India, Veer Chhatrasal stands alongside with Chatrapati Shivaji and Maharana Pratap, as one of the bravest fighters for freedom from the Muslim rule, a man who fought for freedom till the end of his life. Chhatrasal not only established an independent state in Bundelkhand, he was also a patron of fine arts, and a good writer himself. Of the 82 years he lived, Chhatrasal fought 52 battles during his 44 year old reign.

From the Narmada to Yamuna, from Chambal to Tons, Chhatrasal's writ ran supreme.

From the soil that gave birth to great heroes and warriors, its beloved son Chhatrasal, gave equal importance to both the pen and the sword.

The origins of Chhatrasal[\[14\]](#) go back to the Orchha state founded in 1501 by Rudra Pratap Singh, who moved the capital to Orchha(now in MP) from Garhkunder around 1531. Rudra Pratap was succeeded by his son Bhartichandra, who gave the Jagirdari of Mehba, to Rao Udayajit Singh and who in turn was later succeeded by Champat Rai. Veer Chhatrasal was born to the brave warrior couple of Champat Rai and Lal Kunwar on May 4, 1649, in the village of Kachar Kachnai now located in the Tikamgarh district of Madhya Pradesh. Chhatrasal was just 12 years when his parents perished in the fight against the Mughal Army of Akbar in 1661. Amidst the forests, the hills, under the shadow of the forest Gods, Chhatrasal was born in conflicted times, amidst cannons, swords and bloodshed. Along with his elder brother Angad Rai, Chhatrasal, moved to Delwara, to learn the art of warfare from his uncle Saheb Singh Dhandar. He also got married to Devkunwari of the Panwar dynasty as promised to his father.

Chhatrasal had no money power, nor an army, he had to live with the torment of his parents committing suicide in battle due to betrayal, and with his jagir seized away, and he had virtually nothing to him, when he was just 12 years old. But Chhatrasal had something more precious, the famed Bundela courage, the sanskaar, and the self-confidence of Veera Bhogya Vasundhara(The World is for the Brave). He was not broken in spirit, and armed with courage and faith, decided to fight back. Along with his brother, he joined the army of Raja Jai Singh, where he undertook military training.

Jai Singh then was a vassal of Aurangzeb, and when he was entrusted with the Deccan campaign, it was an occasion for Chhatrasal to show his bravery. On May 1665, Chhatrasal showed exemplary bravery in the Battle for Bijapur, and also played a crucial role in defeating the Gond king of Chhindwara too risking his own life. It was Chhatrasal's horse "Bhalebhai" that saved its master from danger, else he would have lost his life. However when Chhatrasal did not receive due credit for the victories, and instead the credit went to relatives of Aurangzeb and court nobles, his self-respect were hurt, and he left the Mughal Army. He came to know that the Mughals were merely an occupying force, who never really cared for the Hindus.

With Shivaji being the rising star of Hindu nationalism then, Chhatrasal felt it fit to ally with the great

Maratha ruler. They met in 1668, where after listening to Chhatrasal, Shivaji advised him to set up an independent kingdom and also gifted him the sword of Bhavani. This is what Shivaji told him “We shall rule over our independent kingdoms, kill the Mughals, and destroy their army.” Motivated by Shivaji’s call for Swaraj, Chhatrasal, returned to his native Bundelkhand in 1670, however by now, most of it was under the control of the Mughals. Most of the local chieftains were vassals of the Mughal empire, his own relatives were not in a mood to oppose Delhi. Chhatrasal received no cooperation from any of the local rulers be it Sujan Singh of Orchha or Shubkaran of Datia, who while honoring him, advised him against any conflict. When the kings refused to support him, Chhatrasal, began to rally the ordinary people against the Mughals, he was helped financially by his childhood friend Mahabali, due to which he was able to raise a small army of just 25 infantry and 5 cavalry.

And in 1671, Chhatrasal raised the bugle of revolt against the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb and the establishment of a Swarajya. His modest army did not have any royalty, but were mostly made up of commoners like Telis, ordinary peasants, craftsmen etc. His cousin Baldiwan also joined hands with him, and his first attack was against the Dhanderas of Sehore, who had betrayed his parents. The Mughal vassal Kunwar Singh was not only defeated and imprisoned, but Hashim Khan who came to assist him was roundly defeated. Sironj and Tibra, were attacked and the looted wealth was used by Chhatrasal to build his army and also to motivate people to join it. In no time, Chhatrasal managed to raise a large army and soon Pawai, Bansa, Damoh, Meher, were all conquered. Munawar Khan, the subedar of Gwalior was routed, and the treasury was sacked, and it came under his control.

Furious at the loss of Gwalior, Aurangzeb sent a huge army under the command of Rohilla Khan which had 8 cavalry units, and an infantry of 30,000. In a pitched battle fought at Garhkot, Rohilla’s army was not just routed by Chhatrasal, but he himself had to flee from the battlefield to save his life. The victory made Chhatrasal that much stronger and between 1671-80, Chhatrasal ruled over a vast kingdom that stretched from Chitrakoot to Gwalior and Kalpi to Garhkot.

In 1675, Chhatrasal met Mahamati Prannathji^[15] the guru of the Pranami Sampradaya at Mau, through his nephew Dev Karanji who was a disciple of the Pran Nathji. Chhatrasal highly impressed by Pran Nathji became his disciple, who blessed him saying “*You will always be victorious. Diamond mines will be discovered in your land and you will become a great emperor.*” Prannathji in a way was to Chhatrasal what Samarth Ramdas was to Shivaji, he would be his spiritual, political, economic advisor.

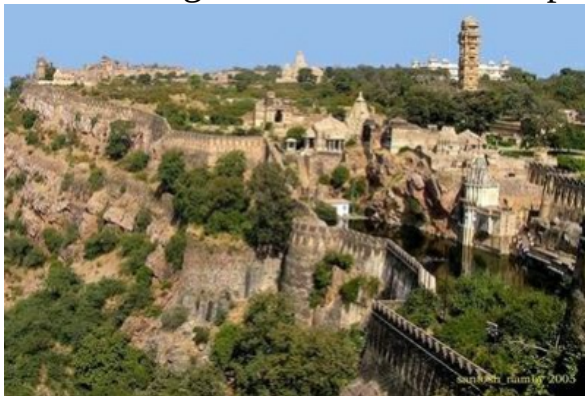
Chhatrasal defeated the Gond ruler of Panna, and made it his capital as per advice of Pran Nathji. This would prove beneficial, as the diamond mines at Panna, bought him prosperity, and helped him to build a mighty kingdom. And soon the forts of Orchha, Sagar, Damoh, Kalpi, Mahoba, Ajner and Vidisha were conquered by Chhatrasal. The Mughal jagirdars themselves began to pay tax to Chhatrasal now. His victory march continued as far as Malwa, Punjab, Rajasthan, establishing the Bundela kingdom. The Nawab of Allahabad, Mohd Khan Bangash, launched an attack on Chhatrasal, he was around 80 years then. Facing a defeat at Jaitpur, Chhatrasal sent a long letter to the Peshwa Baji Rao, reminding him of the need to protect the honor of the Bundelas as gratitude for the assistance they had rendered to the Marathas. With the advent of Baji Rao’s army, Bangash’s army had to suffer a humiliating rout, and Mohd. Khan Bangash himself had to run away from the battlefield in disgrace.

In gratitude Chhatrasal, adopted Baji Rao as his 3rd son^[16], and also gave him the entire Bundelkhand region of Jhansi, Sagar, Kalpi etc, as also his daughter from a Muslim courtesan Mastani. The unity shown by the Bundelas and Marathas in repelling the Mughal forces and creating an independent kingdom in the Deccan is to date an exemplary episode in history. He also gave equal

share of his kingdom to his two sons Jagatraj and Hirdeshah and advised them to always follow Raj Dharma and deliver good governance. Chhatrasal was not just a great warrior, but an equally able and wise ruler too, whose governance ensured, his kingdom always had a full treasury. On Dec 1731, Chhatrasal passed away near Chhatarpur, but he would remain forever in the consciousness of Bundelkhand. Sharp as his sword was, equally sharp was his pen too. An excellent poet himself, he would felicitate and honor other poets too. When the great poet Kavibhushan came to Bundelkhand, Chhatrasal himself carried the palanquin bearing him. Warrior, empire builder, writer, poet, Veer Chhatrasal would forever be one of the great sons of Bharat.

Ranas of Mewar- Rana Kumbha

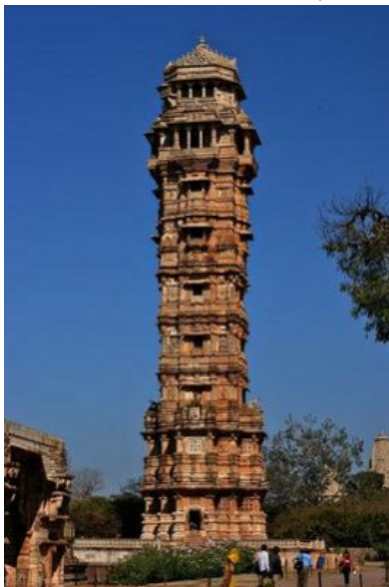
“Garh to bas Chittorgarh hai baaki sab garhaiya” so goes a popular saying in Rajasthan. Loosely it translates to “Chittorgarh is the only fort, all others are mere fortresses”. Even in a state, which swears by its traditions of Rajput bravery, honor and valor, Chittorgarh^[17] has a special place. For long the capital of the Mewar kingdom, known for its fierce spirit of independence, Chittorgarh has had a history of its inhabitants, preferring to fight until death than surrender. And that spirit seeped into its rulers, its inhabitants, who preferred to die fighting till the last breath. At a time, when most of Rajput rulers, submitted to Akbar, it was Chittorgarh, that held out till the end. Akbar had to mount a particularly long siege to subdue it, and even after this, he had to face Rana Pratap, the lone Rajput ruler who refused to submit to him. This was the fort, where Allaudin Khilji had to mount a massive siege, to capture, entranced by the beauty of Rani Padmini, it was in vain, as she along with the womenfolk, committed Jauhar, than be a part of his harem. Khilji killed 30,000 Hindus in reprisal, appointed his son in charge. It was left to Hammir Singh, who belonged to a sub clan of the dominant Guhilots to recapture it back in 1326, and the dynasty was named as Sisodias, after his native village. He also started the practice of using Rana as a title.



Rana Hammir in a way began the next phase of Rajput rule of Mewar with Chittorgarh as the capital that started in 1326 and ended in 1568, when Rana Udai Singh II, had to flee after Akbar occupied the fort. In a sense this phase, of the Sisodias of Chittorgarh was what made Mewar one of the great kingdoms of India, and also fostered the spirit of independence that was so much an integral part of it. Rana Hammir ruled till 1364, and he was succeeded by his son Kheta, who conquered Mandalgarh and Ajmer in his

rule. Kheta was succeeded by his son Lakha who conquered several territories from Delhi and in 1421 was succeeded by his son Mokhal.

Mokhal was assassinated by his own brothers Chacha and Mera in 1433, who whoever had to flee, with the mood of people against them. And thus ascended Rana Kumbha^[18] to the throne, who would become one of the greatest rulers of Mewar. A giant of a personality, both physically and metaphorically, Rana Kumbha would stride like a colossus during the 15th century, one of the fiercest opponents of the Delhi Sultanate. Along with Kapilendra Deva in Kalinga, Deva Raya II in Vijayanagara and Man Singh Tomar in Gwalior, he would be one of the great Hindu kings, who presented a serious challenge to the Delhi Sultanate, and managed to check its advances. Kumbha initially had good support from Ranmal Rathore of Mandore. His main battles though would be against Mahmud Khilji the Malwa Sultan who laid siege to Chittorgarh, multiple times. In Nov 1442, Khilji laid siege and captured Pangarh and Chaumuha and encamped there. In the summer of 1443, Rana Kumbha attacked the Sultan's camp forcing him to retreat to Mandu. The Sultan again made an attempt to capture Chittorgarh in 1443 but was again forced to retreat, by a spirited counter attack from Rana Kumbha. The Sultan again made a final attempt in 1446 at Mandalgarh along with the Sultan of Gujarat, Ahmad Shah, but had to taste defeat again. For the next decade, the Malwa Sultan, did not attack Chittorgarh again.



In order to commemorate his victory over the combined forces of Malwa and Gujarat, Rana Kumbha ordered the construction of the Vijay Stambh at

Chittorgarh fort. Built partly of red sandstone and white marble, the Vijay Stambh or the Tower of Victory is one of the most iconic structures in India. At a height of 37.19 m and 9 stories tall, the tower has numerous images of Hindu gods and goddesses engraved on it. Standing on a 10 feet high pedestal, each story has an opening and balconies, and a staircase inside winding through the central chamber.

Sutradhar Jaita assisted by his 3 sons Napa, Puja, and Poma was the main architect, of this imposing structure, and the sculpture was by Sompura Brahmins from Patan in Gujarat. There are around 157 narrow steps leading to the top, from where you get a great view of Chittorgarh fort, and the surrounding Arravalis.



Great Wall of India

Kumbha's greatest achievement would be the fort of Kumbhalgarh. He was a ruler who recognized the importance of a strong network of forts that would prove to be a strategic advantage against the enemy. During his reign, he built around 32 forts in Mewar, out of which Kumbhalgarh would be the largest and also the most impregnable of the lot. Only once in its history it fell that too to a huge combined force of Akbar, Man Singh and the Mirzas of Gujarat.

Kumbhalgarh is more famous though for the 2nd longest man made wall in the world, the Great Wall of India, not as famed as the Chinese one though. Built on a hill around 1100 m above sea level, the great wall stretches to 36 KM, with 15 Km thick frontal walls, and 7 fortified gateways. There is a common legend, that Kumbha's spiritual advisor, asked him to perform a human sacrifice, in order to overcome an initial impediment during the construction. The advisor, asked him to build a temple where the head fell, but none volunteered. One day a pilgrim volunteered though, and the spot where his head fell, contains a shrine, as well as the main gate Hanuman Pol. It's believed that Kumbha used to burn massive oil lamps that often consumed large amounts of ghee and cotton, to give light during night, to farmers working below.

Apart from being a great warrior, Kumbha was also a fine patron of arts, he himself was a great writer. His reign was known as Mewar's Golden Age for the patronage he gave to writers, sculptors, artistes and poets. Kumbha himself wrote Samgita Raja, Sangita Ratnakara, Rasika Priya a commentary on the Gita Govinda, Sudaprabandha and Kamaraja Ratisara. The scholars Atri and his son Mahesha, Kahana Vyasa who wrote the Ekalinga Mahatya were during his time. Apart from Kumbhalgarh and Vijay Stambha, he also built the Trailokya Jain temple at Ranakpur, Kumbhasvami, Adivarsha temples at Chittor and Shantinatha Jain temple. Sadly he was killed by his own son Uday Singh I, but his legacy would however to continue inspire Mewar.

Ranas of Mewar- Rana Sanga[19]

Rana Kumbha, the great ruler of Chittorgarh was killed by his own son Udai Singh I, who however proved to be a worthless ruler. Under Udai Singh I, Mewar lost both Abu and Ajmer, and soon there was a clash for the throne between Udai Singh and Raimal, his brother. Raimal defeated Udai Singh I in a series of battles at Jawar, Darimpur and Pangarh, forcing him to flee. Udai Singh I tried to seek the help of the Delhi Sultanate, but was struck down by lightning and died. Raimal proved to be a successful ruler, repelling an invasion by the Sultan of Malwa, Ghiyas Shah and later his general Zafar Khan at Mandalgarh. He also put an end to the feud between Chittorgarh and Jodhpur, by marrying Rao Jodha's daughter, Sringerdevi and the Rathores would later be one of the staunchest allies of Mewar. Ajmer was recaptured, and Mewar was once again restored to its glory under Raimal.



Raimal however had to face the agony of seeing his 3 sons-Prithviraj, Jaimal and Sanga, having constant fights with each other over accession to the throne. In fact as per one version, it is said that Raimal's own nephew Surajmall, son of Udai Singh I, was the one who instigated the fights. It's believed that this was Surajmall's way of getting back at Raimal, after he overthrew his father. One such conflict turned serious, with Sanga having to flee, Chittorgarh to save himself.

Though Jaimal was declared the next successor, he was killed in a skirmish, and Prithviraj, was allegedly poisoned by his own brother in law. Having known that Sanga was still in exile, Raimal recalled him back and soon he ascended the throne as Maharana Sangram Singh, or Rana Sanga. One of Sanga's first acts as the ruler was to attack Malwa, which was riven apart by

internal dissension between its Sultan Mahmud Khilji and its Rajput Wazir Medini Rai. Khilji requested Ibrahim Lodi of Delhi and Sultan Bahadur Shah of Gujarat to assist him, while Rai took the help of Sanga, which marked a long rivalry. With support from Rajput rebels in Malwa, Sanga subdued the forces of Malwa and Gujarat in a series of battles. Khilji himself was taken prisoner, though he was freed, but his sons continued to remain as hostages at Chittoor. Soon Malwa was under Rana Sanga's control.

The North eastern part of Rajasthan, was then under the Delhi Sultanate. When Ibrahim Lodi the Sultan of Delhi, had to deal with an internal rebellion, Sanga took advantage and captured key regions there, including the crucial fort of Ranthambore. Ibrahim Lodi attacked Mewar in retaliation, and in a fierce battle at Khatoli near Gwalior, Sanga managed to defeat the Afghans under Lodi. It was in this battle that Sanga lost an arm and a leg, had earlier lost one eye of his in a skirmish. Lodi again tried to attack Sanga during 1518-19, but had to taste another humiliating rout at Dholpur. Sanga, repeatedly defeated Ibrahim Lodi in many battles, and during his reign recaptured a large part of Rajasthan.

With Sanga's empire now stretching up to Agra, his next target was the very heart of political power Delhi, from where he hoped to expand even farther. Gujarat was humbled, Malwa was conquered, and only Delhi lay in his sights to achieve supremacy over the North of India. It was there that Sanga made a fatal mistake, when he allied with Babar against Ibrahim Lodi, who in turn would grant him Dholpur, Biana and Kalpi. However after Babur defeated and killed Lodi in the first Battle of Panipat, he refused to honor the agreement with Sanga. Sanga felt that like Ghazni and Ghori, Babur was more of an invader, who would attack, plunder and leave, it was a huge misjudgment. The fact is Babur was here to stay and establish his own empire. Sanga felt that the only option was to wage a war against Babur, and this was where he miscalculated. With his numerically huge army, Sanga reckoned that victory against Babur would be a formality, he had not however reckoned with the latter's artillery and cannons that played a major role at Panipat. Sanga even took the help of other Muslim rulers like the fugitive Afghan prince Mehmud Lodi and the Mewati Khanzada ruler Hassan Khan Mewati. The biggest blow though would come from Shiladitya, the Tomar ruler of Raisen, whom he sent as an emissary to Babur's camp. Babur

managed to win over Shiladitya, and convinced him to help him out while fighting on Sanga's side. On March 16, 1527, the combined forces of Rana Sangha, Hassan Khan Mewati, Mahmud Lodi and Medini Rai clashed with Babur's forces at Khanwa[\[20\]](#), near Fatehpur Sikri.

It was one of the most fiercely fought battles ever, and at a crucial moment, Shiladitya with a 30,000 strong contingent, defected to Babur's side. It was a great betrayal, and totally demoralized the Rajputs. Though Sanga tried to rally back his forces, there was utter confusion and chaos in the ranks, and he himself was injured. Babur's army also had the advantage of superior fire power, using the latest cannons, and artillery, and soon the Rajput army suffered heavy reverses. Rana Sanga wounded was carried away from the battlefield by the Rathores of Marwar, and he later learnt of the humiliating rout at Khanwa. The Battle of Khanwa, was a game changer, it made Babur the undisputed ruler of Delhi, and he soon began to consolidate his hold over the North. Sanga made a vow not to step into Chittorgarh till Babar was defeated. He however could not live up to it, and in 1528, he died a broken hearted man, injured physically, betrayed by his own.

Pritilata Wadedar



Patiya is one of those small sleepy towns that dot the countryside of Bangladesh, lying on the busy route from Chittagong to Cox Bazaar. The town with a considerably high Hindu population was one of the main centers of revolutionary activities during the 1930s with both Jugantar and the fugitives of the Chittagong Armory Raid[\[21\]](#), clashing against the British police. On May 3, 1971, the town came into news, when more than 300 Hindus were massacred by the Pakistani Army. In a small village close to Patiya on May 5, 1911, Jagabandhu Wadedar, a clerk in the Chittagong Municipality and his wife Prathibamayi Devi, were blessed with a daughter, incidentally Wadedar was not their surname, but a title given by the British. Chittagong was one of the first towns in Bengal that was ceded to the British in 1760, as a buffer against the Burmese. The girl was Pritilata Wadedar, the 2nd of 6 children, others being Madhusudhan(her elder brother), Kanakalata, Shantilata, Ashalata and Santosh. This young girl nicknamed as Rani, would forever be enshrined in history of India's revolutionary freedom struggle, due to an attack on the Pahartali European Club in Chittagong.

We had no clear idea in our school days about our future. Then the Rani of Jhansi fired our imagination with her example. Sometimes we used to think of ourselves as fearless- Kalpana Datta[\[22\]](#)

Pritilata's father, ensured his children would get the best possible education, and she was admitted in the Dr.Khastagir's Government Girls School in Chittagong, the first ever such school for girls in the city, opened in 1907. The school was the vision of Dr. Annadacharan Khastagir, one of the foremost leaders of the Brahmo, who was inspired by the efforts of his friend, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar in promoting women's education.

Pritilata was quite a brilliant student, and excelled in Arts and Literature. One of her classmates was Kalpana Dutta, who would later play a pivotal role in the Chittagong Armory Raid. Both Kalpana and Pritilata were inspired by the bravery of Rani of Jhansi, through their teacher Usha Di, who used such stories to spread the nationalist feeling among students. The school would also produce such luminaries as Nibedita Nag, authors Maitreyi Devi and Umar Tul Fazl, Dr. Suraiya Rehman the first female Brigadier General of Bangladesh, women leader Dr. Maleka Begum among others. Pritilata passed out in 1928, and got admitted into Dhaka's Eden Mohila College, and in 1929, she passed her Intermediate, appearing 5th overall, and first among all the female candidates in Dhaka board.

Pritilata regularly took part in various social activities, when she was at Eden. She was also a part of the Dipali Sangha, which was headed by Leela Nag, the first woman to be admitted to Dhaka University. A close associate of Netaji, Leela was a radical Leftist and a reformer, and the Dipali Sangha was founded by her to spread revolutionary political ideas, as also to make women more empowered. Pritilata learnt physical combat, drill, parade, sword fighting under the aegis of Leela Nag, at the Dipali Sangha. In the meantime incidents like the arrest of Master Da, Surya Sen, as well as reading books on various revolutionary leaders, slowly fomented the spirit of revolutionary thought in Pritilata. Later Pritilata left for Kolkata where she enrolled in the prestigious Bethune College, to study Philosophy. However her revolutionary spirit only began to strengthen day by day and in Kolkata she joined another revolutionary group Chatrī Sangha, headed by Kamala

Dasgupta. The Chhatri Sangha, became a training ground for female revolutionaries in Bengal, with study circles and training in physical combat. Girls from Victoria, Bethune, Scottish Church, Diocesan began to flock to Chhatri Sangha to be trained, it was the equivalent of Dhaka's Dipali Sangha.

Balancing her studies with her revolutionary activities, Pritilata graduated with distinction in Philosophy from Bethune in 1931. However due to her involvement in revolutionary and "subversive" activities, the Kolkata University withheld her degree certificate, along with Bina Das. She later returned to Chittagong, where she took up the job of a school teacher at Nandankanan Aparna Charan Girls' School, a local English medium secondary school, and she was its first Headmistress. The 1930's was the period when Chittagong was one of the nerve centers of the Revolutionary activities. Considering that the city, was under British rule for 170 odd years, the vocal resistance was not too surprising, the groups here believed that only an armed uprising could drive the British away.

Also with Chittagong having a large number of British residents here, racism was felt first hand, with the proliferation of British only public spaces. Pritilata was swept away by the revolutionary fervor, and felt it was time for women also to join the struggle. She felt that women must fight the British on an equal footing with their male comrades, and be prepared to make the necessary sacrifices too.

One of her brothers was already active with the anti-British group headed by Surya Sen, and he introduced her to Master Da. Pritilata met Surya Sen and his associate Nirmal Sen at their Dhalaghat camp in 1932, and Master Da was impressed by her. It was quite rare for a woman to join the revolutionary forces in those days, and one of the revolutionaries Binod Bihari Choudhary. Master Da, however felt that women could prove to be an asset, as they were likely to be viewed with lesser suspicion, when transporting weapons, compared to men. Binod Bihari later had this to say on Pritilata.

"Pritilata was young and courageous. She would work with a lot of zeal and was determined to drive the British away."

Initially, she was assigned the task of just sending messages than taking part

in missions. One such assignment would however have a profound impact on her. In one of their previous assignments, in 1931, Surya Sen planned to kill the then Inspector General of Chittagong, Craig and assigned Ramakrishna Biswas, Kalipada Chakravarty for this.

However by mistake they ended up shooting dead the SP of Chandpur, Tarini Mukherjee and were arrested for this. While Chakravarty was exiled to Cellular Jail, Biswas was ordered to be hanged to death. Biswas family being poor, could not travel all the way from Chittagong to Alipore Jail where he was imprisoned. Pritilata who was in Kolkata at that time, was asked to meet Biswas. She managed to convince the jailor that she was a distant relative of Biswas, and met him around 40 times, and often had long conversations with him. It's believed a sort of mutual attraction developed between the two, and her feelings of nationalism were only strengthened further. Due to her daring nature, Pritilata was now a trusted and respected member of Surya Sen's group.

Pritilata soon took part in many raids, on Telephone and Telegraph offices, and played a key role in the Jalalabad attack, where her responsibility was to supply the explosives. In 1932, Pritilata along with Master Da narrowly managed to escape a police attack his Dhalaghat hideout, which however left Nirmal Sen dead. By now she was on the most wanted list, and Master Da advised her to quit her job and go underground, which she did along with Kalpana Dutta.

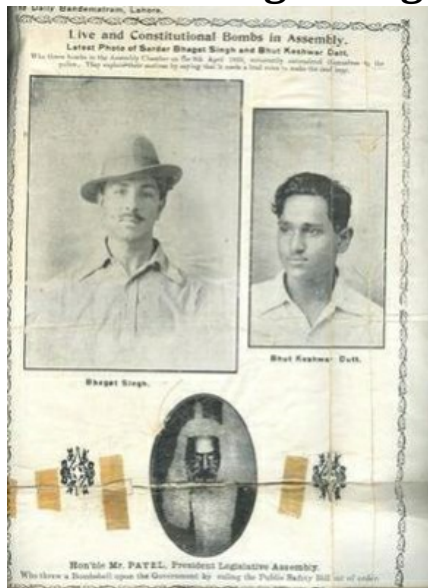


Among the many exclusively for European clubs that dotted Chittagong, one of them was Pahartali, which had a signboard saying "Dogs and Indians not allowed". Surya Sen decided to carry out an attack on this club, and choose Pritilata for the mission, as Kalpana Dutta was arrested a week earlier. Kotawali Sea Side was where she planned the attack, as also the necessary arms training. 23rd September, 1932 was the date of the attack, all members

had cyanide capsules which they were asked to swallow, if they were caught. Pritilata dressed as a Punjabi male, her associates Kalishankar Dey, Bireshwar Roy, Prafulla Das, Shanti Chakraborty were dressed in dhoti and shirt, while Mahendra Chowdhury, Sushil Dey and Panna Sen wore a lungi and shirt.

Around 40 people were in the club, when the group attacked them at 10:45 PM in 3 groups from all sides. Some of the officers in the club, who had revolvers began to shoot back. It was a major attack, 4 men and 7 women were injured while a lady Ms.Sullivan was killed. Hit by a bullet, an injured Pritilata found herself surrounded by British police, and she choose to commit suicide by consuming cyanide, rather than surrendering. The police later found her dead body , and she was in possession of some leaflets, bullets, a photograph of Ramakrishna Biswas and the draft of their attack plan. She was just 21 when she died, however her tale would be an inspiration for many revolutionaries in Bengal and also in India, a true heroine, and a great daughter of the soil.

Shaheed Bhagat Singh-The trial and the execution.[23]



April 8, 1929- The Assembly at Delhi, was in full session. Two young men, both belonging to the Hindustan Republican Socialist Association, walked into the Assembly and threw two bombs, towards the seats occupied by Government officials. The bombs were quite harmless actually, and made a noise, sending out smoke, but did not cause any real damage. There were no injuries to anyone except some minor scratches. However it caused a commotion as the men rushed out of the room in mortal fear of their life. Some like Nehru, Madan Mohan Malaviya, stood there, calm, not really taken aback too much. And amidst the chaos and melee, stood two men, calm, composed and collected, staring defiantly.



The two young men were Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt.

Bhagat Singh, a man who was an icon of sorts in the revolutionary spectrum of India's freedom movement. A man who smilingly went to the gallows, whose only purpose in throwing the bomb was to make the deaf hear. A young man, who did not fear death, and for whom violence was only a last resort to make people take up notice. Books have been written about him, movies have been made on his life and to many an idealist, he has been an aspirational figure. Even on this occasion, the reason Bhagat Singh along with Dutt, threw the bombs in the Assembly, was to protest against a bill that sought to stop labor agitations. Bhagat Singh along with Dutt had been going to the Provisional Assembly for last 3-4 days, doing a recce of the place. Both men were armed with fully loaded revolvers, they could have as well shot the officers and escaped. But both of them calmly laid down their weapons and surrendered to the police, raising slogans of "Inquilaab Zindabad"(Long Live the Revolution). And they threw pamphlets of the Hindustan Republican Socialist Association, quoting the French anarchist Valiant "It takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear". The backdrop to this event was the massive strike by the mill workers of Mumbai, against the working conditions and owners. The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, saw this as a historical opportunity to identify with the labor and peasant movements. The Congress then was typically a party of the bourgeoisie and the elite, the HSRA, on the other hand identified itself with the youth, the workers and peasants. The Government had gone after many socialist leaders following the strike in Mumbai, and was planning to bring in the Trade Disputes Bill, which was primarily a draconian measure that sought to ban trade unions. Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt wanted to make the voice heard clear, and that was the reason behind, throwing the bombs. In the words of Hansraj Vora, who later became an approver in Lahore Conspiracy case.

According to Sukhdev, the object of throwing bombs in the Assembly[\[24\]](#), was that they might be able to show their 'protest' against the unjustifiable provisions of the Trades Dispute Bill and the Public Safety Bill. But they had no intention of killing anybody. The bombs were deliberately kept weak, so that even if their explosion did some harm to the Government benches, no harm might come to the Congress leaders. Bhagat Singh along with Dutt wanted to put across their view point in court, reason why they willingly surrendered to the police. Actually much before they made their statement in

the Court of Sessions, copies of it were sent to all newspapers in India and even outside India like Pravda of Russia and La Humanite of Paris.

The Nau Jawan Bharat Sabha that was founded by Bhagat Singh himself, did the publicity work for the Assembly Bomb outrage case. The statement was distributed all over India, short biographies of Bhagat Singh along with Dutt were circulated to all leading newspapers, which gladly published them. The intention of propagating the goals of HSRA was fulfilled, it came into prominence and the imagination of the youth was roused.



Shaheed Bhagat Singh photographed secretly at Lahore Railway Police Station, during his first arrest- 29 May to 4 July 1927- in connection with Lahore Dussehra Bomb Case (25 Oct 1926) with Constable Sami Pannu DSI: CID Lahore

The Hunger Strike[\[25\]](#)

There was a reason why Bhagat Singh went on a hunger strike for the prisoners, before the Sessions Court started the trial, he wanted to make the public aware of their terrible plight. The prison conditions were appalling, and that is an understatement, prisoners either turned mad or died in captivity. Most prisoners were kept in solitary confinement away from other prisoners, to break their spirit, and to avoid outbreaks. While Bhagat Singh received somewhat better treatment, he was well aware of the harsh conditions under which most prisoners labored. He had nothing to gain personally from launching a hunger strike, he knew that sooner or later, he would be prosecuted for the murder of Saunders, come what may. Bhagat's demand was that all political prisoners should be allowed facilities for reading, newspapers, better light and a better diet. He did not seek an idealistic treatment, what he asked was for the bare necessities to prisoners, which was practicable and could be worked out. The authorities initially dismissed Bhagat Singh's fast, feeling he would not be able to withstand the rigors. However when Jatin Das, joined in the fast unto death, it spread among the under trials too, and soon the strike in Lahore became news all over the nation. The Punjab Government was forced to accede to some of the demands, for instance giving medical facilities to some of the under trials.

Jatin Das meanwhile went into a critical stage following his fast unto death, and it was only Bhagat Singh's intervention that made him break the fast temporarily. He was too weak however by that time. With the authorities however refusing to release Jatin Das, the hunger strike continued, along with Bhagat Singh, Dutt and others. Sadly it had no effect, and Jatin Das died fasting in prison. With Jatin Das's death, Bhagat Singh and his comrades had to give up the hunger strike.



Lahore Conspiracy Trial[\[26\]](#)

With the trial about to begin, Bhagat Singh along with Sukhdev and Bijoy Kumar Sinha, formed a small group which would serve to propagate their ideas, during the trial. They first made persistent efforts to improve the rights of the under trials, through their demands and were able to extract an honorable treatment from authorities. Chairs, newspapers, tables were provided to under trials and they were recognized as political prisoners. Bhagat Singh along with others, also managed to secure the rights of people to visit the under trials regularly at Lahore Central Jail, and this was to ensure that the public would be impacted by the proceedings.

The under trials themselves cross examined the witnesses, including some of the approvers. This again was done more in the need to propagate the party ideals, their motives, their struggle to the public. Bhagat Singh very well knew the verdict would be against him, for him the trial was only a platform to spread his ideology and awaken the masses. The under trials never missed an opportunity to demonstrate on some occasion or other be it Lala Lajpat Rai's death anniversary or the First of May or the anniversary of the Kakori conspiracy, the main intent was to send the message to the public in whatever

way they could.

At one stage, Bhagat Singh demanded that the under trials should not be handcuffed while in trial, and come what may they would never attend court with handcuffs. Of the 16 under trials, only 5 could be managed to be brought to the court that too with some great difficulty. Specially trained Pathans were used to mercilessly beat the under trials, Bhagat Singh himself was singled out for the worst treatment. 8 Pathans fell on Bhagat Singh, and beat him up in full view of the public, and that had the desired effect. The public outrage against the treatment to Bhagat Singh hit a fever pitch, massive demonstrations occurred. And soon the court authorities realizing that Bhagat and his comrades would rather die than be brought to prison in handcuffs, revoked the orders.

The under trials caught the imagination of the world now. A lady from Poland donated money, people from Japan, Canada, even Latin America, began to donate to the cause. Bhagat Singh and Dutt became heroes, their portraits were used in calendars all across the nation. Netaji Subash Chandra Bose, Moti Lal Nehru, Baba Gurudutt Singh were among the nationalist leaders who visited the under trials in prison. Faced with growing resentment and ever increasing support for Bhagat Singh and his comrades, the Government ultimately came up with the Lahore Conspiracy Case Ordinance, and promulgated it on 1930. This only brought in more sympathy for Bhagat Singh and others from public, now being seen as the victims of an unjust and unfair trial.

Bhagat Singh now proposed that the under trials should refuse to accept the court proceedings, but one group felt it was necessary to make a statement in the court. However when Bhagat Singh and his comrades were again handcuffed in court, after raising revolutionary slogans, the other group too did not see the point in attending court. The Government tried their best to bring the under trials to court but failed and so the proceedings were conducted ex-parte.

The Judgment.

On the morning of Oct 7, 1930 a special messenger came to jail from the Special Tribunal court, carrying the execution orders of Bhagat Singh,

Sukhdev Thapar and Rajguru. The day of the execution was not announced, and special armed forces were stationed around to prevent an emergency like situation. Massive protests broke out all over India on the verdict, meetings were held slamming the ex-parte trial and the harsh sentences. Lahore erupted in fury, the Lahore Students Union called for a complete hartal, educational institutions were boycotted. A professor and 80 students in Lahore's DAV College were lathi charged. The protesters raised slogans praising Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru, a resolution was passed in Bradlaugh Hall congratulating the 3 men for their sacrifice. Lala Lajpat Rai's daughter Smt. Parvati Devi, organized another demonstration outside Morigate in Lahore. Protests broke out all over Punjab, hartal was observed in many places.

From Delhi to Mumbai, from Kolkata to Kanpur, from Allahabad to Varanasi, meetings were organized in support of Bhagat Singh. A special Defense Committee decided to file an appeal in the Privy Council for promulgation of ordinance on ultra vires ground. This Committee was formed way back in 1929, to collect money for the under trials and also help the families of the accused. The Committee also arranged to supply books to the under trials, and help the relatives and visitors with boarding and lodging. The reason for appealing to the Privy Council, was to draw attention of the world to the inhumane treatment of political prisoners in India, and also the martyrdom of Jatin Das. Another was to make the world aware of a revolutionary socialist party in India, especially England's enemies. Also Bhagat Singh was aware that the Congress might come up with some kind of sham settlement with the Govt, so he wanted enough time to drag, and the Govt could hang him at such a juncture, which would strengthen the extremist section of the party, while dealing a blow to the credibility of the moderates.



March 23, 1931

Following the failure at the Privy Council, a movement had started to get the sentences on Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru commuted to life imprisonment. Mahatma Gandhi did make an appeal to save them from hanging, but he was not in favor of their methods. In his own words

Hence, though we praise the courage of these brave men, we should never countenance their activities. Our dharma is to swallow our anger, abide by the discipline of nonviolence and carry out our duty.

Youngsters led demonstrations in support of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru and against the hangings. Even in England, the sentence evoked widespread criticism, and even the Viceroy too was not much in favor of it. However the Congress party, suspended the agitation all of a sudden, it was nothing short of surrender. And finally on March 23, 1931, the 3 men were scheduled to hang from the gallows. Bhagat Singh, was reading the biography of Lenin on his last day, a revolutionary who was his ideal, and then along with Sukhdev, Rajguru walked to the gallows with a smile on his face. And to the English Dy. Commissioner who was there to witness the executions, he said with a smile,

Well Mr. Magistrate, you are fortunate to be able to-day to see how Indian revolutionaries can embrace death with pleasure for the sake of their supreme ideal.

And on March 23, 1931 at 7:33 PM to the cries of Inquilaab Zindabad, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru were hanged. Nay, the 3 brave men, gave their lives smilingly for India's freedom, they had exposed the corruption and tyranny of British rule, they had managed to make the deaf hear and rouse a nation. As Netaji Subash Chandra Bose had put it "he had become the symbol of awakening among youths". And Nehru who did not support Bhagat Singh's ideals and methods, paid his tribute.

He was a clean fighter who faced his enemy in the open field ... he was like a spark that became a flame in a short time and spread from one end of the country to the other dispelling the prevailing darkness everywhere.

Ram Prasad Bismil[\[27\]](#)



Dec 18, 1927- Gorakhpur Central Jail, a middle aged woman was waiting to see her son. Her husband and another young man too joined here. Her son was bought out in chains, and when he saw his mother, tears rolled down his eyes. It was his last day, tomorrow he would be hanged to death. As the mother saw the tears she said “What is this, my son? I had thought of my son as a great hero. I was thinking that the British Government would shiver at the very mention of his name. I never thought that my son would be afraid of death.” To which her son replied

“Mother these are not tears of fear, these are the tears of joy, of beholding such a brave mother like you”.

The son was Ram Prasad Bismil, the mastermind behind the Kakori Rail dacoity case, the man who wrote the immortal lines

“Sarfarosh ki Tamanna ab hamare dil mein hai, dekhna ki zor kitna baazu-e-qatil mein hai”

(The desire for revolution is in our hearts, we shall see how much strength lies in the arms of the murderer”).

Ram Prasad Bismil was born in Shajahanpur in 1887, his ancestors hailed from Gwalior, and his native village was close to the Chambal valley. His father was a clerk in the Municipality, and later started a small business lending out money on interest. He taught Ram Prasad Hindi, and he later sent him to a Moulvi to learn Urdu too. By 14 years of age, Ram Prasad was

fluent in Urdu, and read many novels. He learnt the rituals of worship from a priest near to his home and later learnt Sandhya Vandana too from Munshi Indrajeet. He was deeply influenced by Swami Dayanand Saraswati's teachings and his book Satyarth Prakash. He took to Brahmacharya, regularly used to exercise, and practiced it rigorously. The principles of the Arya Samaj had a deep impact on Ram Prasad, which was not to the liking of his father. He even ran away from home after an argument with his father, and was later bought back by his father's friends. Along with some other friends, he started the Arya Kumar Sabha that began to organize meetings and processions. Swami Somadevji an Arya Samaj leader came down to Shahjahanpur, and he was the one who guided Ram Prasad on matters of politics and religion.

The turning point came in 1916, when Bhai Parmanand was sentenced to death for the Lahore conspiracy. Ramaprasad was an admirer of Parmanand after reading his book "Thavasiq Hindu", and the death sentence made him seethe with rage. It was then and there itself that he took a vow to fight against the British government and told his Guru Somadevaji about this. His Guru advised him to think about it, as it could be quite difficult to keep a vow. That is when Ram Prasad touched his Guru's feet and said "If I have the grace of these sacred feet my vow will surely be fulfilled; nothing can come in the way." It was his first step on the way to becoming a revolutionary and by this time he was an active volunteer at the Shahjahanpur Seva Samithi. Around that time the Indian National Congress was having its session in Lucknow, and it was divided into 2 groups, the moderates and the extremists. Bal Gangadhar Tilak who led the extremist group did not believe in negotiation, his goal was Purna Swaraj. When Tilak came to Lucknow, Ram Prasad led a group of youngsters to the railway station, hired a coach, and ensured Tilak was taken in their coach, instead of the car that was already arranged for him. Tilak was given a grand welcome and showered with flowers. At the same session, Ram Prasad came into contact with some members of the revolutionary committee, and soon became a part of their executive committee. However the revolutionaries were facing a funds crunch, they did not have the money to carry out their activities, or arms,

ammunition needed for an armed struggle.

It was then Ram Prasad came up with the idea of publishing books, on revolutionary thought that would bring in the money and also spread their ideas. Taking a loan of 400 rupees from his mother, Ram Prasad first published a book “America ke Swatantrata Ki Itihaas” detailing the American revolution. He then published a pamphlet “Deshvasiyon ke Naam” to draw public attention and sympathy for Pandit Gendalal Dixit, a revolutionary leader who was arrested in Gwalior. Dixit was a school teacher at Auraiya in Etawah, UP, and had led a group of revolutionaries called the Shivaji Samiti. Bismil drew attention to Pandit Genda Lal with his pamphlet Deshvasiyon Ke Naam as well as his poem Mainpuri ki Pratigya.

Though the books were banned by the Government in United Provinces, they were circulated underground, and brought in the money needed. He also began to visit Gwalior, to purchase arms needed for the revolutionary struggle, where he bought some muzzle loaded revolvers and daggers. By now Ram Prasad became a wanted man, with Gwalior state getting a scent of his collection of arms, and once he was almost arrested by the inspector, before giving the slip. He also bought a revolver from a Police Superintendent about to retire, giving an affidavit stating he was the son of a Zamindar and needed it. By this time he managed to build a neat repertory of weapons that included rifles, muzzle loaders, revolvers, daggers and knives. On the other hand his first book on the American Revolution began to be sold all over, in spite of the ban on it.

By now the police were hot on the pursuit of Ram Prasad Bismil, and they also got to know the details of the arms dump at Mainpuri, thanks to the

internal infighting between the revolutionary committee members. Ram Prasad left Shahajhanpur with 3 of his friends, and stayed in Allahabad, now in exile. He had a narrow escape, when one of those friends tried to kill him while he was sitting on the banks of the Yamuna, and soon he found that his other 3 friends were plotting against him in fact. This betrayal upset Ram Prasad, and he went back to Lucknow, and wandered around in gloom for some time. He could trust none around him and his life was in mortal danger. On the suggestion of his mother, he went again to Gwalior state. His father was threatened by police to reveal the whereabouts of Ram Prasad, or else face confiscation of his property.

His father sold all the property instead, and came to Gwalior to be with his son. Ram Prasad took to farming during his exile in Gwalior, and around this time, learnt to express his revolutionary thoughts in the form of books and poems. “Bolshevikon ki Kartoot”, “Man Ki Lahar ”, “Swadeshi Rang”, “Swadintha ke Devi Catherine” were some of the books he wrote. He also translated many Bengali works into Hindi as well as Aurobindo’s Yogi Sadhana. Most of his books were published in a serial form in the magazine Prabha run by Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi as a series called Sushil Mala.

Returning back to Shahjahanpur in 1919, Ram Prasad started a silk weaving factory to support his family, which brought in profits due to his hard work. He however refused to get married and settle down, as he had already dedicated his life for the country. In 1921, Mahatma Gandhi called off the Non Cooperation movement and it gave an impetus to the revolutionary movement. This decision split the Congress into two groups, one headed by Gandhi, another by Chittaranjan Das. Later Das along with Motilal Nehru formed the Swaraj Party, while the youth rallied under Bismil. He went to Allahabad in 1923, and drafted the constitution of the new party along with Sachindranath Sanyal and Dr.Jadugopal Mukherjee. On 3 Oct 1924, the Hindustan Republican Association was founded in Kanpur, with Sanyal as the Chairman and Bismil as the District in charge for Shahjahanpur, he was

also in charge of the Arms. In fact owing to his organizational abilities, he was given the additional charge of Agra and Oudh too.

With his business established well, Ram Prasad plunged headlong into the revolutionary movement again, organizing the workers and volunteers. However the lack of funds was proving to be a main hindrance. While he led some dacoities initially to gather money, Ram Prasad realized it was not sufficient, and there was no point in harassing his own fellow Indians. It was at such a time, while he was travelling from Shahjahanpur to Lucknow, by train, he observed that at each station, the Station Master bought bags of money and placed them in the guard's carriage, there was no one to guard them.

Kakori was a small village near Lucknow, and the 8 Down between Shahjahanpur and Lucknow used to pass through it daily. Ram Prasad decided to stop the train at Kakori and take away the money bags, this was the famous Kakori conspiracy. August 9, 1925, evening time, along with 9 other revolutionaries, Ram Prasad pulled the chain at Kakori station, and looted the Government money from the Guard's cabin. There was no bloodshed, except for one passenger killed accidentally. Soon the Government cracked down, on the Kakori conspirators and, and arrest warrants were issued. While Chandrasekhar Azad managed to evade the crackdown, Ram Prasad was arrested along with Ashfaqullah Khan his close associate. After a long trial that lasted for a year and half Ram Prasad along with Ashfaqullah, Roshan Singh and Rajendra Lahiri were sentenced to death. In spite of massive public outcry against the sentence and appeals from many Congress leaders, the Government did not relent.

It was during his stay in prison that Ram Prasad wrote his own autobiography, considered one of the finest works in Hindi literature. Though under strict watch in prison, he managed to successfully smuggle out copies of his manuscript in 3 instalments. The book was published in 1929, but was again banned by the Government. It covered his childhood, his ancestors, and his experiences with the Arya Samaj, along with more intimate portraits of

his mother with whom he shared a close bond. He was deeply concerned about the future of the revolutionary movement in India. He felt that given the existing conditions in India, the revolutionary movement will not succeed in India for some time, and advised the youth to give up arms, and become real servants of society for change. Bismil was his pen name and his poems were often imbued with revolutionary fervor and spirit. One such was written just before he was about to be hanged

Oh Lord! Thy will be done. You are unique. Neither my tears nor I will endure. Grant me this boon, that to my last breath and the last drop of my blood, I may think of you and be immersed in your work.

Rajendra Lahiri was hanged on December 18th, 1927 and Roshan Singh on December 20th. On December 19th, 1927, Ram Prasad got up, had a bath, said his morning prayers and wrote his last letter to his mother. He walked without any fear to the gallows, completely at peace of mind, even the authorities were surprised. As he mounted the gallows, Ram Prasad shouted “Vande Mataram”, “Bharat Mata ki Jai” and recited the prayer “Vishwani deva savitaha dunitani”. And soon the brave son of India was hanged, his voice was stifled, but the message he gave to his countrymen reverberated wide and clear. Gorakhpur gave him a fitting funeral, with many breaking down seeing his body and he was cremated near the Rapti river. He was a true man of honour and integrity, a man who lived by his principles, never compromising on them even once .

Rash Behari Bose[\[28\]](#)

“The story of Mr. Rash Behari Bose forms a vital part of India’s struggle for independence, and the victory which was finally achieved was in no small measure due to his organizational skill and wonderful spirit of sacrifice. If Netaji came out in the fight as Garibaldi of the movement, Rash Behari’s part in the drama was more than that of a Mazzini”- Thakin Nu, ex-Prime Minister of Myanmar.



There is a whole lot to Rash Behari Bose, one of the masterminds behind the plan to assassinate Lord Hardinge, the Viceroy, a key mover in the Ghadr conspiracy, meant to weaken the British army from inside, a master of disguise, camouflage and the founder of the Indian National Army. In many ways Rash Behari was the opposite of his more famed namesake, Subash Chandra Bose. Netaji was a brilliant orator, one who could motivate people to shed blood for the cause of freedom, the charismatic leader, who could sway the masses like none another. Rash Behari on the other hand was more subdued, with a somber voice, in a sense he was the quiet brains behind the scene, strategizing and building up the movement. And while Rash Behari had his own escapades from the British, remember he changed his residence 17 times in Japan just to avoid detection, nothing like Bose journey in a German U Boat, half way around the world to Japan, or his trek across Central Asia. And yet in a way both men had the same burning desire for freedom, both nationalists, who believed that only an armed revolution could

liberate India.

The man, who would receive the Order of the Rising Sun and lay the foundation for the Indian Army, was born in Subaldaha village of Burdwan district in 1886 to Binod Behari Bose, a small clerk. With his mother passing away when he was just a baby, he was bought up by his maternal aunt Vama Sundari. He did his education from the Dupleix College, Chandernagore, which then was under control of the French. From an early age, Rash Behari was influenced by both French and British political thought and the French revolution particularly motivated him. His teacher Charu Chand also ignited the revolutionary in him. Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's *Ananda Math*, was one of the books that shaped his ideological thought, the other one was Nabin Sen's *Plasir Yuddha*, a collection of patriotic poems.

The speeches of Surendranath Banerjee, Swami Vivekananda deeply influenced him. For some time Rash Behari Bose went through a series of jobs, at Fort William, later the Govt. Press in Shimla and the Pasteur Institute in Kasauli. He finally settled at the Forest Research Institute in Dehradun, where he worked as a head clerk.



It was at Dehradun, that Rash Behari Bose soon got involved in the revolutionary activities, maintaining close contacts with the revolutionary leaders in Bengal and Punjab. He took advantage of the cover his job provided, to execute his plans for manufacturing bombs, as also coordinating with the other revolutionaries. In a way Rash Behari emerged as the link between the revolutionaries in Bengal with those in UP and Punjab.

Amarendra Chatterjee who was in charge of the Jugantar's revolutionary activities in UP, Bihar and Odisha, got Rash Behari in contact with Jatin Mukherjee aka Bagha Jatin, its main leader. The meeting with Bagha Jatin whom Bose described as a "real leader of men" was what gave the impetus to his revolutionary zeal. He planned for an 1857 sort of uprising, interacting with native Indian officers at Fort Williams. He also came in touch with Jatindranath Banerjee aka Niralamba Swami one of Aurobindo's closest associates, with whom he met many members of the Arya Samaj.



In 1911, the British Government decided to change the capital from Kolkata to Delhi, a decision that was politically motivated in a way against the rising tide of nationalism in Bengal. The revolutionaries decided to strike by assassinating the then Viceroy Lord Charles Hardinge, and hatched the plan in 1912. Rash Behari was the mastermind behind this plan, and on Dec 23, 1912, a bomb was hurled at Hardinge, at a procession in Chandni Chowk, where he was travelling on an elephant. While the mahout was killed in the attack, the bomb narrowly missed its target, though Hardinge was badly injured. Basant Kumar Biswas who threw the bomb was captured, convicted and executed, after a huge manhunt and crackdown on the revolutionaries.

Veer Savarkar described the incident thus

On the breast of our Motherland, a carpet of national humiliation was spread

out and dancers moved on it. For the nation, it was a funeral procession. Naturally when others in Chandni Chowk showered flowers and coconuts, the representatives of those who had felt the insult, hurled a bomb which routed the elephant, killed one of the A.D.C's and gave a blood-bath to the Viceroy. For five minutes everybody believed that Hardinge was dead. Verily the triumphant procession was turned into a funeral.

Rash Behari however managed to evade the British intelligence, went back to Dehradun, attended to his job like before, without any suspicion. He took with him a truckload of bombs and even offered to assist the British in their investigation. However knowing that he would be discovered sooner or later, he went underground. Soon the British were aware that he was the chief conspirator and he had a prize of 75,000 on his head, with his pictures in all public places. However the efforts were in vain, with Rash Behari managing to give cops the slip always.

Rash Behari's activities continued unabated, and the Ghadar revolution breaking out provided him the next opportunity. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, the Ghadar party began to plan an armed uprising against the British, with Indian emigrants in US, Canada and the Far East. While these revolutionaries had the arms and money, they lacked the leadership, and Rash Behari Bose filled that gap. It was Vishnu Ganesh Pingle, a US returned Ghadarite who convinced Rash Behari to lead the movement in India. Rash Behari had both the brains as well as the physical strength to pull off this uprising, and Feb 21, 1915, was when it was planned. As per plan Indian soldiers and officers in the British army, would revolt, capture British officers and take over. However thanks to a traitor called Kirpal Singh, the plans were leaked out, and the revolt was put down. Many of the conspirators were captured, and Vishnu Pingle, Bhai Kartar Singh were among those captured and executed.



With the massive crackdown, Rash Behari's friends and associates felt he should leave the country and lead the revolutionary movement from abroad. One of his friends J.M.Chatterjee a barrister, raised the funds for his travel to Japan, and using the alias of Raja P.N.T.Tagore, a distant relative of Rabindranath Tagore, he left for Japan[\[29\]](#) in May 1915. In his own words

I presented to the Commissioner of Police, Calcutta, as one of Gurudev Tagore's Secretaries, proceeding to Japan to make arrangements for his visit to Tokyo. And I came out on a British passport.

En route Bose spent some time in Shanghai, and on June 1915 he landed in Japan. However by now he had become a wanted man and the British were pressurizing the Japanese authorities to extradite him. He would spend his next 30 years in Japan, integrating with the society there, marrying a Japanese woman and where he pursued his dream of a Pan Asian alliance against British imperialism. Mitsuru Toyama one of the influential rightist leaders in Japan, was the one who first offered him refuge. Though Japan at that time was an ally of Britain during WWI, Toyama was against it, as he felt the British were the ones making money out of Japan's ports. Though the Japanese authorities were pressurized to extradite Bose, none of the police dared to enter Toyama's residence. Bose managed to evade, the police, but lived like a fugitive in Japan for a long time, changing residence 17 times no less. It was during his stay in Japan, that he also met Herambh Lal Gupta and Bhagwan Singh of the Ghadr Party and in November 1915, he organized a meeting at Sayoken Hotel in Tokyo, which was also attended by Lala Lajpat

Rai.



During his stay in Tokyo, Bose lived with the Soma family who owned the Nakamura-ya bakery there in the business district of Shinjuku. The narrow alleyways and bustling streets of Shinjuku gave him the perfect place to evade capture. Aizo Soma, the patriarch believed in the concept of Pan Asianism and soon the family had a wonderful bonding with Bose. He also fell in love with Toshiko the eldest daughter, and soon they got married too. He took up Japanese citizenship too, learnt the language and by now was fully integrated into the Japanese society too. However he did not forget the cause of India's freedom and worked for it. An entrepreneur himself he also introduced Indian curry into Japan, making Nakamura-ya the first ever restaurant to serve curry. With Bose now a Japanese citizen, he came out of his hiding and soon began to propagate the cause of Indian freedom among the Japanese elite.

Singapore fell to Japan in 1942 during World War II and around 32,000 Indian soldiers fighting for the British army were taken as prisoners of war by the Japanese, who by this time had taken over Malaya too, that had a substantial number of Indians. Major Fujiwara who is in charge of Singapore, promised the Indian soldiers as well as civilians in Malaya- Singapore, that if they renounced their citizenship, he would offer them all the assistance in the fight against the British. On 28th March 1942, Rash Behari Bose convened a conference in Tokyo and formed the Indian Independence League, this was to organize all Indians living outside into a revolutionary uprising against the British. The ground work was done by him and he invited Indian representatives from Malaya, China, Japan and Thailand. Around the same

time Netaji Subash Chandra Bose was coordinating with the Free India Army in Germany, Rash Behari planned to build up the Azad Hind Fauj on similar lines.



The second conference of the Indian Independence League^[30] was held in Bangkok in June 1942, attended by Indians living in Malaya, Burma, Indo-China, Hong Kong, and a memorandum was presented to Japan, demanding equal rights and status for Azad Hind Fauz. It was in this conference that Rash Behari took the decision of inviting Netaji Subash Chandra Bose to join the Indian Independence League and take over as President. The Indian National Army was the military wing of the League and Rash Behari felt that Netaji had the charisma, oratory skills to lead the armed struggle. The League membership swelled to around 1.2 lakhs and around 50,000 Indian soldiers who had served in the British army joined the Indian National Army. Many of these soldiers were fed up with the discrimination they faced from senior British officers.



Subhash & Rash Behari Bose

Netaji accepted Rash Behari's invite, and made that epic journey in a U-Boat from Germany, and reached Tokyo on June 20, 1943. From Tokyo, Netaji travelled to Singapore where he received a huge welcome from the Indians and Japanese there and on July 5, 1943, Rash Behari handed over the charge

of Indian Independence League to Netaji.

Rash Behari now restricted himself to the role of advisor, with Netaji now leading the League as well as the supreme command of Indian National Army. Rash Behari spent his last days in Tokyo listening to radio broadcasts of the progress of the Fauj, hoping to hear the news of liberation of his beloved motherland. However on Jan 21, 1945 Rash Behari Bose passed away and was cremated with Buddhist rites. In a tribute, Babu Rajendra Prasad, the President claimed

Rash Behari Bose was one of those well-known patriots whose love for the Motherland and burning desire to see her free could never be curbed.

Rash Behari Bose did not live long enough to see India liberated, but the Indian National Army that he founded and built would play its role in the freedom of India.

Netaji Subash Chandra Bose-The hero we lost



I have said that today is the proudest day of my life. For an enslaved people, there can be no greater pride, no higher honor, than to be the first Soldier in the Army of Liberation. But this honor carries with it a corresponding responsibility and I am deeply conscious of it. I assure you that I shall be with you in darkness and in sunshine, in sorrow and in joy, in suffering and in victory. For the present, I can offer you nothing except hunger, thirst, privation, forced marches and death. -Singapore, 1943[\[31\]](#)

Netaji Subash Chandra Bose had been a born rebel, there was the anecdote about him attacking, the English lecturer at his college, who had made racist and derogatory comments about Indian natives. As he himself stated in a speech to the students at Amravati in 1929, "I still remember very clearly the day when my Principal summoned me to his presence and announced his order of suspension and his words still ring in my ears – "You are the most troublesome man in the College." The rebellious, independent spirit was present in him, from quite a long time, and combined with his own intelligence, made him one of the finest thinkers ever. It was this independent, rebellious streak, that saw him, give up a lucrative job with the Indian Civil Services, and plunge into the freedom struggle. That was the time he came across his mentor Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, an activist and freedom fighter, as uncompromising and rebellious as Bose was. Deshbandhu had earlier quit the Congress party, due to differences with Gandhiji over the No Council Entry policy, and formed the Swaraj Party along with Motilal Nehru.

With regard to village self-government, it is not necessary to remind an Indian audience about the village Panchayats — democratic institutions handed down to us from days of yore. Not only democratic but other socio-political doctrines of an advanced character were not unknown to India in the past. Communism, for instance, is not a Western institution. Among the Khasis of Assam, to whom I have referred, private property as an institution does not exist in theory even today. The clan as a whole owns the entire land.

C.R.Das, Motilal Nehru, N.C.Kelkar were among the Congress members, who opposed Gandhiji's suspension of the Non Cooperation movement in 1923, over the Chauri Chaura incident, creating a division between them and those who supported Gandhiji's decision. Subash Chandra Bose, along with Vithalbai Patel was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the tactics of the Congress Party, with both of them favoring an increasingly militant and aggressive approach.

Deshbandhu's death in 1925, saw a weakening of the Swaraj Party, and Netaji losing his political mentor, which however did not deter him from action. Already elected twice Mayor of Kolkata, Netaji toured extensively in Europe during the 30's visiting Mussolini among the other leaders, and that had an influence on his ideology too. While Netaji was heavily influenced by European nationalist movements and thinkers, especially Garibaldi and

Mazinni, he sought to combine it with the best of Indian political and spiritual traditions, a fact resented by the more left wing counterparts of his. He believed that most of the existing political systems in the West already were in practice in India for long, be it Communism, Republicanism or Democracy.

What he looked forward to was a philosophy that sought to combine the best of Western political thought with institutions that were already existing in India. Indian nationalism is neither narrow, nor selfish, nor aggressive. It is inspired by the highest ideals of the human race, viz., Satyam (the true), Shivam (the good), Sundaram (the beautiful). Nationalism in India has instilled into us truthfulness, honesty, manliness and the spirit of service and sacrifice.[\[32\]](#)

Again Netaji did not believe in one race, one culture kind of unity that was propagated by most of European thinkers. He did not believe in imposing a dull uniformity in the name of unity, that tried to suppress differences. For him true unity was achieved only in respecting diversity, accepting differences, the mosaic pattern as opposed to the standard melting pot model. It was precisely the same reason, why he was opposed to the Russian model of communism, though some of his own ideals were pretty much on the left side. He was opposed to the communists idea of internationalism and use of British cloth, I guess one reason, why for decades, the Communists refused to accept him. The communists felt that the labor movement should not be linked with Nationalism, to Netaji both of them were not mutually exclusive.

In the same province where uniform conditions prevail, Khadi does not make much headway in those tracts which are less poverty stricken. In other words, as long as economic condition of the masses is below a certain level, they gladly take to the spinning wheel; but when that level is reached they have a tendency to look out for amore lucrative employment, whether in agriculture or in industry.

Netaji again had his own doubts on the utility of the Khadi movement. As he had stated earlier, while it was helpful for masses, existing at a subsistence

level, once they cross that stage, they seek more gainful employment. I guess a lesson here somewhere for the NREGA scheme masters. Netaji believed that more mass participation in the freedom movement was possible, only if the issues that directly concerned them were taken up along with the cause for freedom. As he put it, barring stray cases as in Bengal, when they took up the cause of jute farmers or in Gujarat on nonpayment of taxes, “we have seldom been able to make a direct appeal to the economic interests of the masses”.

Netaji's impatience with the Congress party was not just in its approach toward fighting for independence, he felt it remained a party of the bourgeois elite, far distanced from farmers, workers and the youth. Netaji spoke in a language that reached out to the youth of the times, he knew and understood their feelings much more than some of the worthies in the party.

I mean the kisans, workers and youngmen. These sections have economic or social grievances against the Congress and hence they kept out because the Congress ought to remove the grievances, social and economical and be not content with the political ones only. We ought to bring them into our fold and harness their energies and resources. Unless the Congress is able to identify itself with the cause of the oppressed classes, I cannot see how the congress can push forward its political programme.

The major difference that caused a split between Netaji and the Gandhi faction in the Congress, was the approach towards total boycott. Netaji felt that with the mood of the nation, totally for a boycott, it made no sense to enter the Councils, it was the best time to exert pressure on the British. He believed it made no use, for Indians to go to the Round Table conference unless, they were given full powers. He quoted the example of the pact between Britain and South Africa, where the former had to agree to accept the S.African constitution in full, with no changes, which is what he sought too. He wondered why the British had to send in the European Chambers of Commerce, Ruling Chiefs etc, when this was clearly a matter to be worked out between the British Govt and the Indian representatives. The differences between him and Gandhiji were too deep, and when Netaji won the election to the post of President at the 1939 Tripura Congress, Gandhiji took it as his

own defeat. And with some deft manipulations by Gandhi's clique, Netaji was forced to resign from the Presidentship post. It was a poignant moment, when Netaji suffering from fever, came on a stretcher to submit his resignation at the venue, and to replace whom, a man called Bhogaraju Pattabhi Sitaramaiah, pretty much a mediocre personality, whose only qualification was being Gandhiji's yes man.

One of the persons who strongly supported Bose, was Pasumpon Muthuramalingam Thevar, in fact he mobilized the entire South Indian votes for Netaj. Pasumpon was also disillusioned with the Congress inability to force the British to repeal the Criminal Tribes Act, became one of the key figures in the Forward Bloc founded by Netaji, the other key personalities being Khurshed Nariman, Senapati Bapat from Bombay, S.B.Yajee from Bihar, S.S.Cavasheer from Punjab.

It will be seen at once that if the principle of freedom is to be applied to society and made the fundamental basis of the society of the future; it will mean nothing short of social revolution. Freedom for the whole of society will mean freedom for woman as well as for man; freedom for the depressed classes and not merely for the higher caste; freedom for the poor and not merely for the rich; freedom for the young and not merely for the old; in other words, freedom for all sections, for all minorities and for all individuals. Thus freedom implies equality and equality connotes fraternity.

What Netaji did not believe was in a false kind of freedom, that would only benefit the bourgeois upper classes and the elite, he like Bhagat Singh, sought a genuine freedom that would touch every section of society. To him, mere political freedom, without emancipation of the poor, the depressed classes and women was meaningless. Netaji was also influenced by the ideals of Swami Vivekananda, and Bhagvad Geeta. He quite often drew on India's glorious spiritual past, its cultural heritage, yet he was not one to be living there forever. While influenced by European nationalist thinkers like Garibaldi and Mazzini, with respect to waging a political struggle, he believed in the spiritual renaissance of India.

India possesses all the resources – intellectual, moral and material, which go to make a people great. And India is still living, in spite of her hoary antiquity, because she has to become great once again; because she has a mission to perform.

What Netaji believed in was the idea of an India, that would awake itself from its slumber, and begin to be true to its potential. He wanted an India where citizens are awake, in ceaseless activity, or what he called our *elan vital*, a concept derived from French philosopher Bergson, which refers to the vital impetus that can drive us to activity and progress. For Netaji it was the desire for freedom, for expression, a desire to revolt against bondage. Netaji wanted the people to study the ancient history, observe where the degradation took place. For him all concepts like *deeksha* or initiation, led to the end goal-freedom.

The Youth Movement is an emblem of our dissatisfaction with the present order of things. It stands for the revolt of Youth against age-long bondage, tyranny and oppression. It seeks to create a new and better world for ourselves and for humanity by removing all shackles and giving the fullest scope to the creative activity of mankind. The Youth Movement is not, therefore, an additional or an exotic growth superimposed on the movements of today. It is a genuine independent movement, the main springs of which lie deeply embedded in human nature.

It is precisely his desire for complete revolution and freedom, that led to his appeal among the youth, many of whom saw the Congress as a bourgeois old party, filled with old fashioned ideals. To Netaji, the youth movement was not just another political movement, it was a holistic movement designed to fulfil the needs of the human soul. For him freedom and self fulfilment were two goals, that had to exist together, one without the other was meaningless.

Little do you know how much Bengali literature has drawn from the earlier history of the Punjab in order to enrich itself and edify its readers. Tales of your heroes have been composed and sung by our great poets including Rabindranath Tagore and some of them are today familiar in every Bengali home. Aphorisms of our saints have been translated into elegant Bengali and they afford solace and inspiration to millions in Bengal.

Netaji had a phenomenal knowledge of Indian history and culture, an aspect that made him reach out to every region in India. Immensely proud of his Bengali heritage and culture, yet at the same time, he recognized the unique cultural synthesis of India, where each and every region, drew something from another region. To him though India's salvation did not lie in living on past glories, and clinging on to outmoded theories. He felt that if India and Asia, were to throw off the yoke of Western humiliation, they had to look forward, move ahead. He sought a revolution of ideas in thought, he desired a complete freedom, where individuals could express, think and move. A freedom that could unshackle the mind and spirit.

So was the INA a failure?

In strictly black and white terms, the Indian National Army , was a failure, and too often Bose's authoritarian control was blamed for it. As the dictum goes History is written by the victors and not the vanquished. Leaving aside the merits of Bose's strategies and his tactics, if we take it on a broader level, the INA, succeeded on many aspects. The INA was a shining example of how he managed to integrate the different communities of India into one. Bose went beyond the platitudes of Hindu-Muslim bhai, bhai, and Unity in Diversity. He walked the talk. Hindus, Muslim, Sikhs, Parsees all were melded together as one, and he actually created a pan Indian identity. But more than military victories, the INA, succeeded in winning the hearts of people.

Ordinary Indians responded in thousands to his call, people willingly gave money and their gold to him. While all other political leaders just paid mere lip service to cause of women, he raised a woman's regiment in his army. The INA failed in its final assault on Imphal , because of their dependence on Japanese for logistics, and the heavy rain. As also the superior air power of the British. But it was the later events that would show how successful the INA was. After the war, when 3 officers of the INA, Gen Shah Nawaz Khan, Col Prem Sehgal and Col Gurbux Singh Dhillon were put on trial in the Red Fort, the person defending them was none other than Jawaharlal Nehru, himself, in spite of the fact, that Nehru and Bose differed in their views. Both the Congress and Muslim League, made the defense of the 3 officers a major political issue.

The British Government was so alarmed that it had to stop BBC from broadcasting this story. But it could not prevent mutinies from breaking out in the British Army , especially the one by the Indian soldiers of the Royal Navy. Chennai, Pune, Jabalpur all saw the Indian soldiers rising in mutiny. The British often used the Indian soldiers as cannon fodder, they did all the dirty work, were the persons on front line in conflict and in many World Wars, many Indian soldiers died fighting for the British empire. Yet in grant for this, the British, treated the Indian soldiers as second class citizens, and exploited them. It was Bose's Indian National Army which sparked the uprising. Years later Clement Atlee , cited the revolts of the Indian Army, as a major decision, to grant independence. Britain already economically and militarily weakened, after WW2, knew that it could no longer trust the Indian armed forces to prop up it's Raj. So in a way, Bose, contributed significantly to the end of the Raj.

So was Netaji too Utopian for his own good?

I conclude this post with a quote of what he said about himself, and leave it to the readers to judge.

Friends, I do not know if you will consider me to be Utopian in my theories or if you will dub me a visionary. But I shall plead guilty if I am accused of being a dreamer and I love my dreams. These dreams are to me as real as the workaday world is to the man in the street. From my dreams I derive inspiration and motive power. Without these dreams I can hardly live for life will lose its meaning and it's charm. The dream that I love is that of a free India; India resplendent in all her power and glory. I want India to be the mistress of her own household and the queen of her own destiny; I want her to be a free republic with her own army, navy, and airforce and her own ambassadors in the capitals of free countries.

Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon[33]

*Sehgal Dhillon Shahnawaz
Teenon ki ho Umar Daraaz*

The voices rent the air outside the Red Fort, on November 5, 1945 as the 3 men were brought to trial. The 3 men of the Indian National Army were charged with waging war against the king in violation of section 121 of the Indian Penal Code. If guilty they would be sentenced to death. A battery of eminent lawyers defended these 3 men in court, Jawaharlal Nehru, Bhulabhai Desai, Tej Bahadur Sapru and demanded that these men be treated as prisoners of war. The then commander in chief Claude Auchinleck, decided to remit the sentences and the men walked free later.

Captain Shah Nawaz Khan– A captain in the Indian Army, captured by the Japanese after the fall of Singapore during World War II in 1942. He was profoundly influenced by Netaji Subash Chandra Bose, to join the Indian National Army, hypnotized by his personality and speeches in his own words. After independence he would later join the Congress party, and serve as an MP and also a Union Minister.

Colonel Prem Kumar Sehgal–A graduate of the IMA, Dehradun, as acting captain in the Baluch Regiment fought against the Japanese in the Battle of Malaya. As prisoner of war, he was motivated by Netaji and joined the INA taking up arms against his former British colleagues.



Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon was born in Algon Kothi, a small village located near Amritsar, to Sardar Takhar Singh, a veterinary surgeon in King George's 8th Light Cavalry. Due to his father's job, he was constantly moving from place to place and studied at various schools, in Lahore, Raiwind, Dipalpure and was a polyglot fluent in Hindi, Urdu, Persian, Punjabi and English. Also a Boy Scout to boot, he completed his high school from DAV in Montgomery(now in Pakistan), in 1931, and later taught science for some time at the Gordon Mission College in Rawalpindi.

In 1933, on the advice of J.F.L.Taylor, his father's friend, he joined the Indian Army as a sepoy in the Training Battalion of 14th Punjab Regiment and afterwards was sent to IMA, Dehradun where he was considered just average. On the outbreak of World War II, his training in IMA was cut short, and he was posted to Sher Dil Paltan, the 14th Punjab regiment, and he moved to Secunderabad in 1940. On March 3, 1941, Gurbaksh left for Penang Island, then to Ipoh and finally to Sungei Pattani in South Kedah now a state of Malaysia. As part of the 5th Indian Infantry Brigade, Gurbaksh, was assigned the defense of Penang during the War, and was stationed at Jitra, in Malaysia, close to the Thailand border in Dec, 1941.

Following the US entry into the War, after Pearl Harbor, the Japanese forces destroyed the RAF squadrons at Alor Star, Kota Bharu airfields. Under his CO Colonel Fitzpatrick, Gurbaksh led a valiant fight against the invading Japanese forces at the Battle of Changlun, for 8 long hours, before it finally fell. By now it was apparent that the Japanese were taking Singapore, by February 9, 1942, two divisions had landed there. Raffles square was heavily bombed on February 13. 1942, and Gurbaksh Singh, had the rather unpleasant task of disposing off the bodies of those killed. Finally on 15 February, 1942, Singapore fell to the Japanese, and the British forces unconditionally surrendered. It was one of the worst defeats ever for the British Empire, their darkest hour as Churchill called it.



Major Fujiwara Iwaichi

Farrer Park Address

The turning point was something called the Farrer Park address, on 17 Feb, 1942, 2 days after Singapore fell to the Japanese. Some 45,000 Indian Prisoners of War, had gathered to listen to Major Fujiwara Iwaichi, who was overseeing the Japanese forces at Singapore. Fujiwara spoke to the surrendered Indian troops of the need for a joint Indo- Japanese collaboration, of pan Asian prosperity and Japanese interests in a free India.

Fujiwara promised the Indian soldiers that they would not be treated as POWs but as friends and allies. The next person to address the meeting would be Captain Mohan Singh, a close friend of Dhillon's. Mohan Singh had earlier fought against the Japanese at Jitra, and after it fell, was taken as a prisoner to Alor Star, now one of the larger cities in Malaysia. Fujiwara was the one who convinced Mohan Singh to revolt against the British empire, and unite with the Japanese for the greater good of Indian independence. It was Mohan Singh who laid the foundations for the Indian National Army, contacting Indians serving in South East Asia, and recruiting from the prisoners captured during the War.



Motivated by Fujiwara and Mohan Singh, Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon, joined the INA on February 17, 1942 and also took a vow not to drink till India became independent. Dhillon was placed in the Nee Son camp, around 21 km from Singapore, and later served at the Changi Camp, looking after the British, Australian prisoners of war. Falling ill at Changi, Dhillon was sent to the Seletar Camp, now one of the Singaporean Army's main bases, and recovered at the hospital there.

After his recovery, Dhillon, attended the Biradari conference organized by Mohan Singh in April, 1942, which in a way laid down the rules for INA too. It finally resulted in the Bangkok Resolution which proclaimed the formation of an All Indian Independence League. On Sept 1, 1942 Dhillon got his commission and was posted as a Major 10 days later. The Bangkok Resolution was not yet ratified by the Japanese, and they still did not recognize INA as an independent army. In the meantime Mohan Singh was arrested by the Japanese, in Dec 1942, after differences broke out, but Dhillon still continued in INA on the advice of Rash Behari Bose.

In anticipation of Netaji's arrival INA, was now re organized, it's new Head Quarters was the Directorate of Military Bureau(DMB), with Col J.K.Bhonsle as its Director. Dhillon was appointed as Dy. Quartermaster General in the Q Branch at Army HQ. By April 1943, the Army HQ was gazetted, and when Netaji finally arrived on July 2, 1943, Dhillon was in charge of the 5th Guerilla Regiment as the Second in Command to Major J.W.Rodrigues.

He was responsible for the training, discipline and keeping the morale of the

troops too. Sent to fight on the front at Alor Star, he proceeded via Mergui, Tavoy(in Thailand) and Rangoon. He flew in Netaji's personal aircraft Azad Hind from Bangkok to Rangoon in 1944, and also conducted the ceremonial parade on Oct 1944 to commemorate the first anniversary of the Provisional Govt of Azad Hind that had been formed.

On 15 Oct, 1944, he met Netaji at Rangoon and was soon promoted as commander of the Nehru Brigade in INA. He was assigned the task of holding the Irrawaddy River, and formed an advance party from the 9th Battalion and left for Pagan in Dec 1944. On 12 February 1945, the INA defenses along Irrawaddy were bombed by Allied aircraft, and an assault was launched on the 8th battalion that however failed. Under severe bombardment and assault, the INA nevertheless managed to hold Irrawaddy, thanks to Dhillon's leadership, would be their first major victory. The other assault by the British opposite Nyaungu using motor boats was also repelled by the INA, resulting in a huge loss of life. However INA could not hold for long in the face of sustained assault and Dhillon had to eventually withdraw to Pagan.

Dhillon again was given the task of checking the Allied advance to Kyauk Padaung from the British stronghold of Nyaungu, using guerilla warfare extensively. This was to deny the British the control of the crucial Nyaungu-Kyauk-Padaung-Meiktila road. There were reverses in March 1945, when many of the Nehru Brigade members surrendered under the British assault, leading Netaji to issue Special Orders of the Day for their execution on grounds of cowardice and desertion. The area of Mt.Popa and Kyaukpadaung offered the strongest resistance against the British attacks, forcing them to use much longer routes, which took longer time, and also wore down their vehicles.

The situation changed rapidly from April 1945 onwards, the British launched a 3 pronged attack on Mt.Popa and Kyaukpadaung , the area suffered heavy bombing. Under furious assault from the British tanks and armored vehicles, INA withdrew to Magwe, and by now with Burma(nee Myanmar), turning against Japan, they did not receive any cooperation from the local residents. The INA had to retreat through thick jungles , they were helped by Gen Aung San's People's National Army that controlled these areas. By the time, INA crossed the Irrawaddy and reached Prome on May 1, 1945, the war had been

lost, and Rangoon was already evacuated. Moving through the jungles of Pegu Yomas, they reached Wata, a small village, and learnt that Germany had already surrendered. Pegu was already taken by the British, and Rangoon soon fell in April. The INA soldiers were by now war weary, many of them exhausted, tired and sick from the arduous trek through the jungle and loss of lives during the retreat.

On March 17, 1945, the INA [\[34\]](#) formally surrendered to the British, the POWs were sent to Pegu, Dhillon along with Shah Nawaz where they were taken to the No. 3 Field Interrogation Centre under the command of Major C. Dhillon was later shifted to Rangoon Central Jail on May 18, 1945 and Shah Nawaz soon joined him in June. As the INA trials began of Dhillon along with Shah Nawaz and Prem Sehgal, riots broke out all over India, the Naval Ratings Mutiny broke out. The Armed forces which the British used to enforce their authority over India were now turning against them, mutinies were breaking out everywhere. Most of this played a major role in the British leaving India.

Finally on January 4, 1946, Dhillon was released along with Shah Nawaz and Prem Sehgal after a long trial. Post his release, Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon spent his life at Shivpuri in Madhya Pradesh, at Dhillon's Den, where he passed away peacefully in 2006.

20 Loaves and A Forgotten Mutiny[\[35\]](#)



HMS Hindustan

In March, 1976 P.V.Chakraborty, former Chief Justice of Kolkata HC wrote a letter, where he described a correspondence between him and the British Prime Minister Clement Atlee in 1956. Atlee often mocked by Churchill as a “Modest man, with much to be modest about”, was visiting India in 1956, after it became independent. And during his visit, met Chakraborty, who was then acting Governor of West Bengal, and was asked “The Quit India Movement of Gandhi practically died out long before 1947 and there was nothing in the Indian situation at that time, which made it necessary for the British to leave India in a hurry. Why then did they do so?”. Atlee gave out several reasons, one was Netaji Subash Chandra Bose’s Indian National Army, which weakened their army, and the other was the Royal Indian Navy Mutiny. And when Chakraborty asked him about impact of Gandhiji’s 1942 Quit India movement, Atlee wryly remarked with a smile “Minimal”.

Royal Naval Ratings Mutiny, or what is often called the forgotten mutiny in India’s history, an event which unlike the 1857 mutiny or the Quit India movement, does not really strike much resonance, except among hard core historians. Or Leftists, since they were the only ones to have backed this whole heartedly.

The Beginning.

Like the 1857 Mutiny, the 1946 Royal Naval ratings mutiny had a rather mundane beginning. It was not an overnight event however, the resentment was building up among the naval ratings, and other Indian members of the Army. The INA was the most serious of all that really shook the faith of the

British. Not that well known is something called the Royal Air Force Mutiny that also took place in 1946, over the working conditions, and demobilization of British troops after the end of the war.



The Naval Ratings

The beginnings of the Naval Ratings Mutiny were in an event that occurred on Jan 16, 1946 when a contingent of Naval ratings arrived at the Castle Barracks in Mint Road of Mumbai's Fort Area. This contingent was from the training ship HMIS Akbar that was at Thane and it was around evening 4 PM. On being informed of the arrival of the contingent, the galley cook, took out 20 loaves of bread, casually added some water to the mutton curry as well as the dal that was from the previous day and served it. The food was so tasteless and substandard that only 17 of the ratings took it, the rest of them went ashore.

This was not a one off incident, such neglect was quite common, and what was even worse, repeated complaints to senior officers of the working conditions, and did not elicit any response. As the complaints became galore, the ratings were more and more frustrated, both with the conditions as well with the indifference of the higher ups. Adding fuel to the fire was the trial of the INA leaders, Netaji Subash Chandra Bose fight for freedom and the exploits of INA during Siege of Imphal began to be fed to the ratings. It gave them a sort of inspiration, and hope that the mighty British empire was not that invincible.



HMS Kumaon

The Events

On Feb 18, 1946, Naval Rating M.S.Khan led the revolt on HMS Talwar, and a strike committee was formed. In Karachi, ratings began the revolt on HMIS Hindustan, anchored off the Manora Island. M.S.Khan and another naval rating Madan Singh, had by now taken control of the mutiny, and it began to spread. By Feb 19, ratings from Castle and Fort Barracks had joined the revolt. Ratings left their posts, and began to go around in Bombay on trucks carrying pictures of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose, who by now had become their inspiration.



And soon it spread, to Kochi, Vizag, Kolkata, officers who opposed the strike

were thrown off ships, and the mutineers used radio sets to communicate among themselves. HMIS Talwar became the epicenter for the mutiny as the strikers used the radio sets to send messages to and fro between themselves. It was a perfectly coordinated revolt that was now striking back. And soon the other workers in the Navy too joined, from the sloops, the minesweepers and the offshore establishments in Mumbai, along Hornby Road, near CST, now the Dadabhai Naoroji Road. The White Ensign of the British was lowered from all the ships, and British officers were singled out for attack by mutineers, using hockey sticks, crowbars and whatever else they could lay their hands on.

Flora Fountain soon reverberated with cries of Jai Hind, and slogans of liberation. British officers and their wives were forced to shout Jai Hind by the protestors. The Taj Mahal Hotel, Yatch club all had guns trained on them throughout the day. The Royal Indian Air Force joined in solidarity with the striking ratings, and 1000 men from Andheri, Marine Drive camps came in. The Gurkhas in Karachi, one of the sword arms of the British army, refused to fire on the mutineers.

The mutiny now began to spread like wildfire, Kolkata, Vizag, Chennai, Karachi, reverberated with slogans of “Strike for Bombay”, “Release 11,000 INA prisoners” and “Jai Hind“. The tricolor was now flying on all the ships, and by Feb 20, British destroyers positioned themselves near the Gateway of India. The British Govt, now headed by Clement Atleee, was alarmed, orders were given to the Royal Navy to put down the revolt. Admiral J.H.Godfrey, the Flag Officer in command of the Royal Indian Navy, gave an ultimatum to the mutineers to submit or perish. On the other side, a wave of patriotic fervor, surged ahead in support of the mutineers. The mutineers had taken control of all the ships and were prepared for a last ditch stand from the clerks to the cleaning hands to cooks and wireless operators, every single Indian was ready for the battle.

On Day 3, the Royal Air Force flew a squadron of bombers near Mumbai harbor, while Admiral Arthur Rullion, issued an ultimatum, asking the mutineers to surrender unconditionally. In the meantime, the 2nd Battalion of the Black Watch, silently managed to secure the island of Manora near Karachi.

Soon the decision was made to engage HMIS Hindustan in a straight

confrontation, which was now under the control of the mutineers. The ultimatum was given by the Royal Artillery on Manora island, to either surrender or be prepared for war. At 10:33 AM, the guns began to fire on HMIS Hindustan, and the naval ratings returned the fire. However they could not hold on for long, and by 10:51 they surrendered and HMIS Hindustan was taken over by the British. Soon HMIS Bahadur and Himalaya were subdued, and taken over by the British, and the revolt at Karachi was put down.

With increasing bombardment and not much hope in winning a long drawn war, the mutineers began to surrender, and on Day 4, negotiations took place, where most of the striker's demands were conceded in principle. Immediate steps were taken to improve the quality of the food, and living conditions, and assurance was given, that release of INA prisoners would be considered favorably. 7 RIN sailors and 1 officer were killed, while around 34 were injured and 476 discharged from duty.

The Betrayal.

Sadly the mutineers got no support at all from the Indian National Congress as usual, in fact they were even condemned for their actions. Mahatma Gandhi issued a statement condemning the mutineers for revolting without any guidance from a political party. One of the lone voices in the Congress who supported the mutineers was Aruna Asaf Ali, who said she would rather unite Hindus and Muslims on the barricades. The Muslim League too denounced the mutineers, arguing that unrest on the streets was not the best way to deal with grievances and it should be through constitutional methods only. One reason could be that spontaneous uprisings like these threatened the centralized political authority of both Congress and Muslim League, and affected the dealings with the British Govt. One more reason was that neither Congress nor Muslim League was genuinely a mass based party, they still remained a preserve of the upper class, upper caste, elite, and these kind of mass upsurges left them uncomfortable.

The only political party that supported the mutineers was the Communist Party of India then, all others just left them in the lurch. Both Sardar Patel and Md.Ali Jinnah were united in their condemnation of the mutineer's

actions, and Aruna Asaf Ali was the lone voice from Congress in support of them. The mutineers faced court martial and imprisonment on surrender, and what was worse even after independence, they received no support from either the Govts of India or Pakistan.

The Royal Naval Ratings Mutiny lasted only for 4 days and was put down swiftly, however the impact went much beyond. The British were now fully convinced, that they could no longer trust the Armed forces to maintain their control over India. So far the British managed to hold on to India, through the Armed forces, but when they began to revolt, they knew their time was up. First the INA revolts and then the Naval Ratings mutiny, add to it the revolts in the Air Force too, plus the fact that Britain was effectively pauperized after World War II, all influenced their decision to quit India, much more than that 1942 movement.

Lala Lajpat Rai



Oct 30, 1928, past his 60's, with an imposing personality, he stood on the stage at Lahore, and roared in a defiant voice.

“Every blow on our bodies this afternoon is like a nail driven into the coffin of British Imperialism.”[\[36\]](#)

The man had received terrible lathi blows on his chest earlier while leading a protest against the Simon Commission, add to that he had to endure humiliation from the British. That man was none other than the “Punjab Kesari” Lala Lajpat Rai, one of the members of the Lal-Bal-Pal trio, the others being Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Bipin Chandra Pal, the so called extremist faction of the Congress. 17 days later on Nov 17, 1928, the great man died of the injuries caused to him by the lathi blows. In 1865, in a tiny village called Dhudika, in the Ferozepur district of Punjab, on the 28th of January, Lala Lajpat Rai, was born to an Urdu teacher, Lala Radha Kishan and Gulab Devi.

Born into a family that valued, freedom and self-respect, Lajpat Rai, imbibed the values that were to define him. Growing up amidst poverty, Lajpat Rai, nevertheless managed to complete his education, studying law at Govt.

College, Lahore. The stint at Lahore's Govt College, was what shaped Lajpat Rai's value system too. Reading up on India's glorious past, and the great people that walked across the land, Lalaji felt tears welling up as he thought of the present state of degradation under the British rule. It was at that very moment that Lalaji swore to fight for freedom and serve India.

The Arya Samaj founded by Swami Dayananda Saraswati was attracting a whole lot of youths in Punjab due to its progressive, reform minded ideals, Lala Lajpat Rai was one of them. In 1882, Lajpat Rai joined the Arya Samaj, when he was just 16, the ideals of freedom and service to society by then had fully taken root in his mind. The idea that India could prosper only if the chains of slavery were broken, was firmly rooted in Lalaji's mind.



However forced to support his family financially, Lala Lajpat Rai, took up the post of a mukhtiar, a minor lawyer, at Jagrav when he was just 18. On finishing his law course, Lalaji began to practice in Hissar. For Lala Ji, however, his aim was the freedom of India, he had no thoughts of settling down in his law practice and leading a comfortable life. He was inspired by the bravery and patriotism of the great Italian nationalist Mazzini, after reading a book about him. It was the period spent in Hissar that shaped Lalaji's career and life too. After the death of Swami Dayananda, it was Lalaji along with his friends who started the Dayanand Anglo Vedic College(DAV) to spread a more nationalist, Hindu oriented education. From his salary as a lawyer, Lalaji ensured his father would live comfortably enough, by setting aside some money for him. The major part of his salary was spent by Lalaji on the Arya Samaj activities and setting up branches, as also spreading education. Lala Ji was a devout follower of Arya Samaj, implementing its ideals of reformation of society, spread of education and advancement of Hindu Dharma.

Though a devout Hindu, Lala Ji managed to win the respect of people of all religions, for his integrity and outlook. In 1888, Lalaji joined the Indian National Congress, when he was still a lawyer, at the same time, the Muslim leader, Syed Ahmed Khan left the party, saying it did not represent Muslim interests. Syed Ahmed Khan, argued that Muslims should not support the Congress, but the British Raj. A furious Lalaji wrote bitter open letters to him, in the Urdu weekly Koh-i-noor. At a young age of 23, Lala Lajpat Rai's reputation spread quickly in the Congress, for his speeches and his dynamism, he received a tumultuous welcome, wherever he went. Lalaji felt Hissar was not adequate for his ambitions, and he migrated to Lahore in 1892, where he practiced as an advocate at the Punjab High Court.

During the 1893 Congress session at Lahore, Lala Ji, worked hard, to make it a success, Dadabhai Nauroji was then the President. At the same time, there was a split in Arya Samaj, Lalaji, ensured that the DAV College would take shape, and he backed it all the way.

Lalaji was also an outstanding writer, he wrote the biographies of the great Italian nationalists Garibaldi and Mazzini in Urdu. He also wrote books about Shivaji Maharaj , Lord Krishna and Swami Dayananda, through which he exhorted people to fight for their freedom and Dharma. By now the British Govt saw Lalaji as a threat and sought to arrest him. Lalaji truly believed in the concept of Manava Seva, Madhava Seva(Service to Humanity, is Service to God). When the Central Provinces were struck by a devastating famine in 1896, it was Lalaji who reached out to the people. It was the time when Christian missionaries, were preying on the people's miseries there. Again Lalaji bought around 250 orphaned children from Jabalpur, Bilaspur, and placed them in Arya Samaj run orphanages.

He did the same in 1898, when a far more severe famine struck Kathiawar, Rajasthan, rescuing many destitute, orphaned children. Around 2000 people were saved, and provided with food, clothing, education, employment and also saved from efforts of Christian missionaries to convert them. Again in 1905, when an earthquake devastated Kangra region, Lalaji extensively toured Punjab, raising funds, and collected money extensively.

During his tour of England along with Gopal Krishna Gokhale, he played a

major role in educating the public about the pitiable state of Indians under the British Raj. He was now more than convinced that only freedom was the way out for India, and he raised these views in the 1907 Surat session of Congress. 1907 was when the 50th anniversary of the Great Indian Mutiny of 1857 was being observed, Lahore and Rawalpindi were rocked by protests, peasants in Punjab were angry at Govt proposal to increase water rates. Lalaji openly backed the peasants, an act that made the British Govt look at him like a criminal, as Sir Denil Ibson, the Lt Gov of Punjab observed

It appears that some leaders like Lalaji have sworn to drive the British out of India. An attempt is being made to kindle hatred Against Englishmen and break the government administrative machinery.

In addition to these unjust laws like Colonial Settlement Act and Land Mortgage Amendment Act were causing widespread agitation against the Govt. Sensing Lalaji as a threat, he was arrested and deported to Mandalay, along with Ajit Singh(uncle of Bhagat Singh). There were widespread protests against this act by the Govt. Tilak wrote in Kesari.

If the British rulers act like the Russian Czars, the people of India will have to react as the people of Russia did.

Faced with massive outcry against the deportation of Lalaji, the Govt was forced to bring him back from Mandalay to Lahore and set him free. So great was Lalaji' s popularity among the masses, that he easily won the elections to the Lahore Municipal Council in 1911. When WWI, broke out Lalaji was in England that time as a representative of Congress from Punjab. However sensing that he could be detained indefinitely, if he were to return to India, Lalaji left to America, where he lived a period of exile.

Touring US, Lalaji made many speeches about the condition of India under British rule and also wrote many books there. It was during his stay in America, that Lalaji established the Indian Home Rule League in New York, and also started the journal Young India. Lalaji also wrote two books Arya Samaj, and England's Debt to India, during his exile in the US, and the movement gained support there from many ordinary Americans. He also

visited Japan in the interim, and won the admiration, respect of many people there. In 1919, after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Lalaji desired to return to India, with the War also over now, by this time, Lalaji was successful in convincing many of the Americans and Englishmen of the need for freedom. [\[37\]](#)

When Mahatma Gandhi announced the Non Cooperation Movement in 1920, Lalaji along with Ajit Singh jumped into the movement whole heartedly. Punjab was brought to a grinding halt, as schools, colleges were boycotted, work was affected in courts and offices. When Lalaji undertook a tour of Punjab for collecting money, people voluntarily donated, such was the man's appeal among the masses. In 1921, Lalaji was arrested, and sentenced to rigorous imprisonment, due to which his health suffered in jail and he became ill. The Govt again had to release Lalaji after there was a massive public protests and he spent time in Solan, HP to recover.

Lalaji strongly worked for the interests of Hindus, he recognized that someday or other, the Muslims would soon demand a separate nation. When riots broke out in Kohat(currently in NWFP of Pakistan), in 1924, around 150 Hindus were killed and another 400 forced to flee to Rawalpindi. It was again Lalaji who stood by them, and he started movements for Organizing Hindus. In 1925, Lalaji emphasized the need to preserve Hindu Dharma at a Hindu Mahasabha conference, and in 1926, he also attended the International Labor Conference at Geneva.

When Katherine Mayo wrote Mother India, that provided a totally one sided view of India, which Mahatma Gandhi called a gutter inspector's report of India, Lalaji answered her back through his book Unhappy India. With the failure of the Non Cooperation movement, the British Govt appointed a commission headed by Sir John Simon and 6 other members, for political reforms. It was entirely made up of Whites, and there was not one single Indian member in it. Lalaji resolved to boycott the fraud Commission, and moved a resolution in Central Legislative Assembly Hall in 1928.

The present constitution of the Commission and its terms of reference are unworthy of acceptance by this House; therefore, this House advises the Government that it should have nothing to do with the Commission. Let the

members understand that they are slaves in the eyes of the British Government and of the world. When they vote on the resolution let them remember that in 1919, because of a single epidemic, six crores of people died in our country. Let them remember that in this country ten crores of people do not have even one meal a day.

Lalaji's question was simple, What right did the British Parliament have to frame a constitution for India? Only Indians had the right to decide the future of India. Lalaji toured the whole of India to give publicity to the Motilal Nehru report saying those who opposed it were the enemies of Swaraj and India. Oct 30, 1928 The Simon Commission was expected to arrive in Lahore, there were massive protests with cries of "Simon Go Back".

A sea of black flags covered Lahore, and the protest was led by the Lion of Punjab, Lala Lajpat Rai. The police began to brutally lathi charge the protestor, the then inspector Sanders, ordered them to explicitly target Lalaji who was protected by Sukhdev, Bhagavati Charan and others. The police mercilessly beat Lalaji, all over the body, on his head, leave him bleeding profusely. The police action on Lalaji led to a massive outcry, however Lalaji advised the youth to observe restraint. Just one word from him would have led to a blood bath. On 17th November, 1928, the Lion of Punjab passed away from the blows rained on him, however as he said, they were the nails hammered in the coffin of the British empire.

Begging or prayer cannot bring freedom. You can win it only through struggle and sacrifice.

Lala Lajpat Rai, was truly a great son of Bharat, a man of many qualities. As an educationist he founded DAV that would provide yeoman service. National College, Tilak School of Politics were a result of Lalaji's untiring efforts and vision. The Urdu weekly Vande Mataram, the English weekly People, was founded by Lalaji. And in commerce, The Punjab National Bank and Lakshmi Insurance Company were founded by him. Lalaji was not just a freedom fighter he also built great institutions that last even to this day.

As an Arya Samajist, Lalaji tirelessly fought against untouchability, and

founded many orphanages for destitute children. The Gulab Devi Hospital , Servants of People Society were the results of Lalaji' s efforts. He also fought for worker's rights, starting the All India Trade Union Congress, and while a socialist in belief, he was not doctrinaire in his views.

Ram Manohar Lohia



The League of Nations meeting in Geneva, somewhere during the 1930's. The Indian representative the Maharaja of Bikaner an ally of the British , rose to spoke on behalf of India. In the galleries a young lad of 22, with spectacles and short in height, stood up and whistled loudly. He was promptly sent out, the young lad, smiled much like the rebellious student in class, who heckles the professor, and feels proud on being sent out. He did not stop with there, he dashed off letters to various newspapers, questioning the validity of sending a British lackey to represent India at an international forum.

The young rebel here was a certain Ram Manohar Lohia, often called the stormy petrel of Indian politics. If there was one word to describe Lohia, maverick would be the right answer. There was much to Ram Manohar Lohia, a devout Gandhian, who went underground during the Quit India movement, a maverick socialist who felt that both Marxism and Capitalism were not suited for India, a man who helped the Leftists in Goa against Portuguese rule and one of Nehru's fiercest opponents in Parliament. It would not be appropriate to classify Lohia in the Western framework of Left and Right, he would not have fit in either. While a socialist in economic policies, he was also very religious. One of the most revolutionary thinkers, who was against caste divides, stood for women's equality, and who advocated individual freedom over the collective.

Born in 1910, in a small village Akbarpur(now part of Ambedkar Nagar district) in Uttar Pradesh, his father Hiralal was a merchant and also a diehard nationalist. With his mother passing away when he was small, Lohia was bought up by his grandmother. His father was a devout follower of Mahatma Gandhi, and Lohia attended the Gaya session of the Indian National Congress when he was just 13 as a volunteer, he later attended the Gauhati session too. Passing out from Vidyasagar College in Kolkata, with Honors in English literature, he later went to Germany(then under Nazi ruler) for higher studies. His doctoral thesis in Germany was on the Salt Satyagraha in India and he and he got his Doctorate in both Economics and Political Science.



Returning to India in 1932, when he was all of 22, Lohia plunged headlong in to the freedom movement in response to Gandhiji's call for Satyagraha or Civil Disobedience. Imprisoned for his participation, Lohia met likeminded nationalists, who felt that things were more or less status quo and no real change was happening. Imprisoned in the Nashik Road Jail, these young men wanted to take the movement to masses, in this case, the poor, the peasants, the working classes. And within Congress, they formed a youth wing calling it the Congress Socialist Party[38], which along with Lohia, had Jayaprakash Narayan, Yusuf Mehrally, Achyut Patwardhan, Ashok Mehta, Acharya Narendra Deva and Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya. Lohia began to edit a periodical called Congress Socialist, and when Congress opened a new branch for external affairs, he was the one chosen to look after it, due to his vast knowledge of international affairs. It was due to Lohia's efforts that Congress could have contacts with thinkers from all parts of the world, and he also set up a separate cell for Indians abroad.

When Britain entered the World War in 1939, and pulled India forcibly into it, Lohia gave speeches protesting India's involvement, for which he was arrested. Again during the Quit India movement in response to Gandhiji's Do or Die call, he along with JP, set up an underground movement and a secret broadcasting station. Imprisoned again in 1944, he was taken to Lahore, where Lohia was tortured in the worst possible manner in prison.

He would be put in handcuffs of different sizes and weights; he was forced to spend sleepless nights, in case he drowsed off, his head would be twisted or his handcuffs pulled at. Lohia was finally released from prison in 1946 along with JP, under Gandhi's pressure, but the relentless torture had weakened his body, though his spirit was as strong as ever.

On release, Lohia went to Goa, which then was under Portuguese colonial rule that was even more brutal than the British one. It was at Goa he met his friend Juliao Menezes, a communist, and author of the seminal anti Catholic, anti-Portuguese book "Contra Roma e além de Benares" ("Against Rome And Returning To Benares"). Menezes later admitted that he wanted Lohia in Goa to disturb the peace there. Lohia did that promptly involving himself with leaders of the Goan Communist movement and fostering sedition.

He was once again arrested, and expelled to British India after some time. But by this time, Lohia in a way laid the foundation for the freedom struggle in Goa against the Portuguese rule.

He once again tried to reenter, Goa on Sept 28, 1946 but was again arrested at Colem, put in solitary confinement and expelled, prohibiting his entry there for the next 5 years. He also stirred up a revolt in Nepal, against the despotic rule of the Ranas, creating an alliance with the socialists and communists there, most of whom were mentored by him at Banaras.

Lohia was dead against Partition, and was unhappy when India split into 2 on Aug 15, 1947, when it became independent. Gandhiji was shot dead on Jan 30, 1948, and Lohia along with others, were not happy over the way the Congress was handling the situation, be it the aftermath of Partition or the communal riots. The Socialist wing of Congress felt that it had become a party of the elite, and decided to break away from it. On April 15th, 1948 the Socialists left Congress, and formed their own party, Lohia was one of its

main leaders. This party was founded to fight for the rights of the middle class, peasants and working class, on a common platform. Lohia became one of Nehru's biggest critics, as he toured all over the country spreading the ideals of the Socialist Party, and attracting the youth.

Kagodu Satyagraha[\[39\]](#)

Kagodu was a small village in Shimoga district of Karnataka, known for its sandalwood forests. Like most other parts, feudalism was prevalent here, the peasants toiled without any reward under the tyrannical landlord, who forbade them from even raising their head. However in the wake of independence, the peasants began to organize themselves and started to protest against the landlords. The landlords struck back, evicting the peasants from the lands which they were cultivating. In 1951, the peasants formed the Farmers Union and Socialist Party of Karnataka, launching a satyagraha against the landlords.

The Govt backed the landlords, and many farmers were arrested in Shimoga and Sagar. Lohia immediately rushed to Kagodu, in July 1951, and with a flag in hand, launched the Satyagraha, leading the peasants in a procession throughout the village. He was arrested, brought to Sagar, and later placed in confinement in the Govt House in Bangalore, where he was later released on an appeal to the High Court. Appalled by the state of prisoners in Shimoga Jail, where they did not get proper food, Lohia handed over his money to the inmates, asking them to get better food with it. Lohia was a fighter for the common man, the downtrodden, as he took part in every agitation all over India, fighting for their rights. He did not have mere pity for them, but respected them as human beings.

When the first General Elections were held in 1952, Lohia did not participate, but travelled all over the country, campaigning for the Socialist Party. However with the Socialist Party failing to achieve much success, he merged it with the Kisan Mazdoor Party founded by Acharya Kripalani. This merger created the Praja Socialist Party, of which Kripalani was the President, while Lohia was the General Secretary. They had earlier been together in Congress too, when Kripalani was the General Secretary of AICC, Lohia was heading the External Affairs department, and there was a close bonding between the

two men. Lohia was a true man of integrity who did not spare the misdeeds of his own party itself. When Travancore and Cochin were merged into one single state, the Praja Socialist Party was in power ruled by Pattamthanu Pillai. When the Govt resorted to police firing on striking estate workers, Lohia vehemently protested and demanded that the Govt should resign. With his refusal to budge from his stand, Lohia was finally expelled from the Praja Socialist Party in 1955.

Towards the end of December in 1955, Lohia again started the Socialist Party from Hyderabad, with a torchlight procession. He also started Mankind an English daily and Jana a Hindi monthly that would propagate the views. Lohia was not in favor of both Capitalism and Communism as was being practiced in the West and Russia. Having studied various political thinkers, Lohia was deeply influenced by Marx and also believed in Gandhi's principle of Satyagraha. He felt that massive mechanization and huge industries were suited to Europe and US, with their smaller populations, but would not suit India with its much larger population, he rather favored smaller machines, and more small scale industry. He also advocated doing away with English, and felt the Government should introduce official communication in Hindi or regional language, so that it can communicate better with people. He felt that English created an elite parasitical class, which alienated them from the common man, so regional languages should be given more priority.

He was also a strong advocate for women's rights, demanding reservation in jobs for them and that their talent should be properly used. He felt that a society and a nation cannot progress unless women are not given their due, and felt they should have equal rights and justice. Emancipation of women was the foundation of social revolution, there would be no prosperity without it. He was firmly in favor of non-alignment, did not want India to be part of either the American or Russian camps, and he sought a third bloc consisting of nations from Asia, Africa and Latin America, that shared similar problems. He hated racism based on skin color, was once arrested in Jackson, a small town in Mississippi, US, protesting against the racist prejudice in a restaurant.

57 times was Lohia imprisoned in life, at least 12 times after independence. He was a man who believed in ideals, his cause, and the fight for justice. He firmly believed in nonviolence, and advised people to hold their heads high have self-respect. Lohia's nonviolence was standing up for justice peacefully, not bowing in front of injustice, it should not a facade for cowardice. "I prefer the spade to the throne" Lohia once remarked, saying that our country needed more hard work, and utilization of the existing manpower. He remained true to his word, fighting for the rights of people, working along with the masses, rather than seek power.

Lohia vs Nehru

If there was one man in post independent India who was not swayed by Nehru's personality and dared to take him head on, it was Lohia. He had the guts to contest against him in Phulpur during the 1952 General Elections, though he lost, his courage was there for the world to see. He entered the Lok Sabha in 1963, from a Bye Election in Farrukhabad, UP, and his maiden speech was one of the most historic ones ever. He stunned the nation when he revealed that over 25,000 Rs, was spent on Nehru's security, a sum he argued a poor nation could ill afford. He was man of simple living, often would wear the same dress again and again. Nor did he own any property, and his home in Delhi was always open to party workers. Lohia again won from Kannauj in 1967. He fervently believed that reservation was needed for Dalits and Backward Castes, in order to give them better opportunities in education and uplift them.

He was a polyglot, fluent in English, German, French and Bengali, apart from Hindi. He loved economics, and studied the subject thoroughly, it was not easy to fool him with some mere statistical jugglery. An excellent orator, he could win over people, with the sheer force and persuasion of his arguments. He also was an author of the books, "Marx, Gandhi and Socialism", "Culprits of the Division of Bharat", "Wheel of History", "Leisure amidst Politics", and "Power Determination". He had an excellent knowledge of Ramayana and Mahabharata, and wrote articles on Ram, Krishna and Shiva. He felt that

our mythological characters might actually have been real life historical figures, Shiva for all we know might have been an engineer who dug a canal for Ganga. He had a love for Rama, and organized a Ramayana Mela near Ayodhya.

This is what he had to say about Ram and Krishna.

Eight parts of Vishnu were embodied in Rama. His was a limited personality. But Krishna had sixteen parts of Vishnu. Hence his personality was as mighty as the ocean.[\[40\]](#)

He had great regards for M.Viswesarayya whom he called the 2nd greatest Indian after Mahatma Gandhi. He also wanted a single script for all Indian languages, which however did not work out. He was against the existing set up, where all power was centralized with the Union Govt, and once elected, MPs, did not have any contact with the common man. He suggested a decentralization of power at all 4 stages- Center, State, District and Panchayat. He wanted villages to be autonomous, have their own local self-Government, instead of having to depend on the State or Central Govt for every small need. On September 12, 1967 Ram Manohar Lohia passed away peacefully into sleep, another of Bharat's great sons, was no more physically, but his legacy and views would continue to live after him.

Swami Dayananda Saraswati



1838, Tankara, Kathiawar(now currently in Morbi district of Gujarat)– A 14 year old boy named Moolshankar was keeping awake, during the Shiv Ratri Jagaran, at the local temple. So named, because he was born in the Mul Nakshatra, Moolshankar was a devout Shaivite, like his family, and by age of 14 had become well versed in Sanskrit Grammar, Vedas. While most of the other devotees in the Jagaran had fallen asleep, Moolshankar was still keeping awake.

And then he saw a rat climb on to the Shiva Linga, and begin to eat the holy Prasad. He was shocked, how could some one called as Mahadev, allow a rat to jump on his idol and eat the holy Prasad. He asked his father the same question, who replied that the real Shiva, lives somewhere in Kailash, and we need to worship with real devotion. Moolshankar was not convinced with the answer, and that was the time he felt idol worship was pointless.[\[41\]](#)

Born to Karshanji Tiwari, a tax collector and Yashoda, Moolshankar grew up studying the scriptures, and he was prepared for a comfortable life ahead. Two incidents however had a deep impact on him, one was the Shivratri Jagran one, another was the death of his younger sister and uncle from cholera. The latter especially had a profound impact on him, and as he began to ask questions on life and death, his parents began to worry for him. They

decided to get him off married at a young age, as was the tradition those days.

Moolshankar however had made up his mind that the married life was not for him, and in 1845, he ran away from home. From 1845 to 1869, Moolshankar spent time roaming all over India, living an ascetic life. He was initiated into the order by Poornanda Swamy, and given the name of Swami Dayananda Saraswati.

With the bare minimum of clothes, a begging bowl, of Swami Dayananda , travelled to every pilgrimage site, crossing jungles, rivers, mountains, deserts for finding the answer to his question. He met many sages, swamis, but none could really give him what he was looking for. At this time, he met a monk Poornashrama Swamy, who told him “There is only one man on this earth who can fulfil your desire, and that man is Virajananda Dandeesha. He lives in Mathura.”

In 1860, he finally managed to meet the blind sage Virajananda[\[42\]](#), who was also known for his harsh temper, and strict attitude. He asked of Swami Dayananda to throw Kaumudi and Saraswatha, the 2 famous texts on Sanskrit Grammar in the Yamuna, and then asked him to start afresh. Swami Dayananda willingly surrendered himself to Virajananda, who was quite a hard task master, known for his strict discipline. He would fetch water for his Guru, even in biting cold and rain, clean the floor, and even bore his beatings. Once after a very severe beating he had from his Guru, one of his fellow students asked him why he was bearing with this being a Swami himself . To which he replied

“Do you think that our Gurudeva beat me out of hatred? Just as a potter shapes the lump of clay by pounding and beating it, the guru shapes the personality of his disciple by beating him and correcting him.”

When the time came to leave the Ashram, his Guru, took a promise from Swami Dayananda, that he would spread the knowledge of Vedas, and revive Hinduism once more. Virajananda, felt that Hinduism had strayed from it's original Vedic roots, and was corrupted by too many meaningless rituals. And he asked Dayananda to revive Hinduism, take it back to it's Vedic roots, that would be his true Gurudakshina.

The Debate at Kashi.[\[43\]](#)

As per the promise given to his Guru, Swami Dayananda, travelled all over the North to places like Ajmer, Haridwar, Jaipur, Meerut, Gwalior, spreading the knowledge of Vedas among ordinary people. He mentioned that Idol worship was never a part of the Vedas, and God has no shape nor form. He fearlessly attacked the weaknesses of every religion, and spread awareness among people of the greatness of Sanathana Dharma, asking them to unite as one. On 22nd Oct, 1869, Swami Dayananda, had one of the greatest debates in Hinduism ever with 27 distinguished scholars of Varanasi, attended by the Maharaja of Kashi. Attended by 50-60,000 people, Swami Dayananda was ranged against some of Varanasi's greatest scholars, as he debated with them on whether idol worship was sanctioned by the Vedas .

So powerful were the arguments of Swami Dayananda, that the scholars had to admit their defeat. At this juncture, some of the unruly elements in the crowd, began to hurl, slippers, stones and rocks at Swami Dayananda, who nevertheless did not flinch. The chief Pandits of Varanasi, Taracharan Tarakaratna, Bala Shastri, felt remorse, and confessed "Really what Swamy Dayananda says is perfectly true. But we do not have the moral courage to go against the prevailing customs and traditions. So we have chosen to oppose him." The Maharaja of Kashi impressed by Swamy Dayananda's courage, wisdom and integrity, invited him to his palace and treated him royally.

Though he was basically from Gujarat, Swamy Dayananda was convinced that there should be one national language, Hindi, and in fact wrote all his books in that language only. He was also a true nationalist, who loved Bharat, and aimed for the welfare of it's masses.

Once an Englishman impressed by his speech, asked Swamiji to go to England and teach them Dharma there. And this was his reply.

In the few years of life left to me I shall try to spread the knowledge of the vedas among my countrymen. Once the lamp of wisdom is lighted here, its light is bound to spread towards the west too.

He could have earned fame, going abroad, but for Swami Dayananda, his motherland, Bharat was far more important, and he missed no opportunity to

spread the greatness of India. He advised Indians to awake, learn from their glorious history, tradition and use it to shape the present. He hated the present system of education that created contempt for India.

Your ancestors were not uncivilized men living in forests. They were great men who enlightened this world. Your history is not a bundle of defeats. It is the eulogy of the conquerors of the world. Your Vedic Scriptures are not the songs of cowherds. They are the immortal truths which shaped mighty souls like Sri Rama and Sri Krishna. Awake! Arise! Be proud of your glorious history. Take inspiration from it to mould the present. Shame upon the modern education which fills you with contempt for your ancestors!.

A true nationalist, Swami Dayananda, felt that the only way India could achieve freedom was through armed revolution. The Arya Samaj^[44], which was founded by him in Bombay on 10th of April, 1875, was ostensibly meant to propagate his goal of social reform. It however also became a crucible for nationalist leaders and the freedom struggle. Many branches of the Arya Samaj were founded in princely states like those of Udaipur, Jodhpur, and he aimed to bring together the princes to fight against British rule.

The Arya Samajs all over North played a major role in shaping the nationalist, revolutionary ideas among masses. From Swami Shraddhananda to Lala Lajpat Rai to Bhai Parmanand, a whole new generation of freedom fighters, emerged from the Arya Samaj. Revolutionaries like Ram Prasad Bismil, Roshanlal were proud of their association with the Arya Samaj.

Apart from his tremendous intelligence, Swami Dayananda was also known for his exceptional physical strength too. He once stopped the carriage of a Maharaj, by holding its wheel, and in Kasaganj he took two bulls fighting on the streets by their horns, and managed to tame them.

Dayananda always cared for humanity, he was sensitive to the sufferings of the ordinary masses as he once said –“ To love the creation of God is to love God Himself”. He fought against casteism, and other social evils, and wherever he went, exhorted people to shake off their lethargy. He was against the caste system, untouchability, child marriages. He fought for women's equality, was against the purdah system, and stressed the need for pure conduct in one's life. He made many aware of the glory of Hinduism, through

his teachings. Many young Hindus, who were about to accept Christianity, changed their mind, after listening to him and became staunch followers. He also took back, people who had been converted by force into Muslims and Xtians, back to Hinduism, performing the Shuddhi rites for them. He was bitterly opposed to untouchability, calling it a curse on society, as he said.

Untouchability is a dreadful curse of our society. Every living being has a soul which deserves affection; in every human being there is a soul worthy of respect. Any one who does not know this basic principle cannot understand the true meaning of the Vedic religion.

Education was what Dayananda espoused, however he was against the existing Western system, which he felt only created people with contempt for native traditions. He favoured the Gurukul system, where students would stay with their teachers, and there would be no class, caste differences. The son of a King, and the son of a farmer would be the equals in a Gurukul, which would be located away from the city. Along with studies on Indian culture, Vedas, the Gurukul would also teach modern sciences like astronomy, mathematics, geology, so that the student receives a complete education.

Satyartha Prakash[\[45\]](#)

One of Swami Dayanand's most famous works, was Satyartha Prakash(The Light of Truth), a 14 chapter book, containing his teachings based on the Vedas. His book, explained the importance of the Vedas, and it was critical not just of the bad practices in Hinduism, but even of other religions like Christianity, Islam, Sikhism. He declared that knowledge was not just about showing how to get salvation after death, it must also show a man how to live usefully in the world. He stressed on the need to follow the Vedic path of Dharma(righteousness), Artha(Wealth), Kama(Pleasure) and Moksha(Salvation).

Back to the Vedas was what Swami Dayananda emphasized, and said, that while the main aim is salvation, unless we have a worthy life, we can never attain salvation. Dayananda was fearless in his pursuit of truth and knowledge, even in the face of great dangers and threats. Once a Christian preacher threatened that he would send him to prison, if he continued to show

the faults in religion, to which Dayananda replied “My friend, was not Jesus Christ crucified for speaking the truth? But I fear no one to speak the truth.” While he was fearless enough to point out the faults that had crept into Hinduism, he did not spare Islam or Christianity either.

And this frank, honest attitude of his earned him many enemies, from all religions. As he once said to a person who threatened to cut him with his sword.

I shall point out defects wherever I find them. I am not a rabbit to be frightened by the cries of jackals like you.

However the end came well and nigh at Jodhpur, the Maharaja there was a follower of Swami Dayananda. The ruler however spent a lot of time with a dancing girl Nanhi Jaan, and was rebuked by Dayananda, who said his action was not proper conduct for a Kshatriya. The offended Nanhi Jaan, conspired with the cook to poison Swamiji, and asked him to mix powdered glass pieces in his milk. Dayananda drank the milk and realized he had been poisoned, tried vomiting it out, but was too late. Sores broke out all over his body, and Swamiji had to suffer torture, due to the pain. When the cook confessed that he had poisoned Swamiji, he gave him some money, and asked him to run away, because if he were found out, he would be hanged to death. Though the Maharaja shifted Dayananda to Mt.Abu for better treatment, it was of no avail. And on Oct 30, 1883, the great soul passed away on Diwali day, uttering the word Om, in presence of his disciples.

Thus ended the life of one of modern India’s greatest thinkers, a social reformer, a nationalist, a writer, a man who taught Indians to speak and think fearlessly. Swami Dayananda Saraswati, a truly great son of Bharat.

Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu[\[46\]](#)

“Dhittamaina silpalu, devalalu,
Kattukadhala, chitrangi kanaka medalu.
Kottukoni poyi vunna koti lingalu,
Veeresalingam okadu migilenu chaalu”
(Magnificent sculptures and temples,
Golden Roofs of the story teller Chitrangi,
Crore Shiva lingas washed away,
Veeresalingam left alone is enough).

So go the lines of this Telugu song from the movie Andhra Kesari, a biopic on Tanguturi Prakasam Pantulu. The song pays a tribute to the city of Rajahmundry in Andhra Pradesh, located on the banks of the Godavari. What I have given is a rather approximate translation of those lines, and may not really capture the true essence. But it is the last two lines that really are worth a look at “*Kottukoni poyi vunna koti lingalu, Veeresalingam okadu migilenu chaalu.*” As per the Brahmanda Purana, the Gods once conducted a Yagna here to propitiate Shakti, and they cut off their own body parts to sacrifice as offerings. Pleased with their devotion, Shakti emerged with a radiance of a crore(Koti) suns and the effluence of a crore moons, and one crore(Koti) lingas emerged here. In due course of time, those Koti Lingas were believed to have been washed away by the Godavari. The lines basically stress the fact, that one Veeresalingam was equivalent to all those Shivalingas washed away. The reference here is to Kandukuri Veeresalingam, often regarded as the father of Modern Andhra Pradesh, social reformer, activist, writer, the quintessential Renaissance man.



While the Bengali renaissance is well known and discussed, one aspect that has often not really got the due attention is the way it impacted reform movements in other parts of India. The work done by Brahmo leaders like Raja Rammohun Roy, Keshav Chandra Sen and reformers like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, began to spread to other parts. Kandukuri Veeresalingam was one among them, deeply influenced by Keshav Chandra Sen, and whose work would forever play a defining role in Telugu society and culture. In a way, Kandukuri was to Telugu people, what Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar were to Bengalis or Mahatma Phule, D.K.Karve were to Maharashtrians, someone who raised his voice against the social evils and hypocrisy that was eating up society from within those days, and who defined it's direction. Consider his contribution, the first person to conduct a widow remarriage in Andhra Pradesh, the first to start a co-educational school here.

And as a writer, the first Telugu novelist, the first autobiography in Telugu, the first to write a history on Telugu poets and the first Telugu writer to translate scientific books. In a sense he was the pioneer in many ways, laying the foundation for modern Andhra society. Personally an agnostic, Veeresalingam, started the Brahmo Samaj in Andhra Pradesh, and a social welfare organization called Hitakarini for which he donated his entire property. And if that was not enough, he also carried out a crusade against corruption in Government as well as in the courts.

On the grave of Veeresalingam, the following lines can be found by Chilakamarthi Lakshminarasimham.

తన దేహమం తన గోహము
తన కాలమం తన ధనంబం తన వర్షయ జగ
జ్జనులకం వనయగోంచిన
ఘనుడం వరశలంగకవం జనులార !
(Tana Dehamu, tana Gehamu
Tana Kaalamu, tana Dhanambu,
Tana Vidya jagagnanuluke viniyoginchina
Ghanudee Veeresalinga kavi janulara).

Loosely translated, the above lines meant – “ One whose body, time, wealth, learning was used for humanity, that great man was Veeresalinga Kavi”. On April 16, 1848 Veeresalingam was born to Subbarayudu and Punamma in Rajahmundry, his ancestors hailed from Kandukur, now in Prakasam district, which also accounts for his surname. With his father passing away when he was just 4, Veeresalingam grew up in the loving care of his peddanana(paternal uncle), Venkataratnam, who treated him like his own son. He also had a close attachment to his mother, who was his main support after his father passed away.

At the age of 5 he joined a local school, where he soon learnt the Bala Ramayana, Sumathi Satakam, Krishna Satakam in due course of time. A brilliant student, he joined the Government High School in Rajahmundry, in English medium, when he was 12, and that is where he studied English literature, as well as the works of Keshav Chandra Sen, that influenced him. Sen’s ideas on women’s emancipation, influenced Veeresalingam and he soon began to raise questions on the condition of women in society, as well as the existing hypocrisy prevalent then. A rationalist, he had no interest in rituals, and disbelieved in existence of ghosts and spirits, in fact he would often go to the graveyard, alone to debunk the theory of ghosts. He was appalled at what he saw was the selfishness, laziness, hypocrisy that seemed to have come over the Telugu people then, and he openly raised his voice against it, through his essays and articles. He was considered a madman, this is not Bengal, this is Andhra, your views won’t work here, was what Veeresalingam was told. Though he was married off to an 8 year old Bapamma, he spent the rest of his life fighting against child marriages.

With his *peddanana(father’s elder brother)* , who was his guardian passing away in 1867, it fell upon Veeresalingam to run the household now. He tried

for a Government job, but when the officers said that he needed to bribe if he wanted one, he refused to take it up. He was keen on becoming a lawyer, but again seeing the corruption and rot in the legal profession, he decided against it. Finally in 1869 he joined as a teacher in Korangi village, where he worked for 2 years, and then moved to Dhavaleswaram near Rajahmundry, as the headmaster of an English medium school. As a teacher, he also inculcated values in his students, as well as awakened them on the condition of the society. As someone who deeply felt for the cause of women's education he started a girl's school at Dhavaleswaram. In 1876, he quit his teaching job, and started a monthly called Vivekavardhini. His aim was to awaken the masses on the social evils prevalent then, through his writings.

While the monthly used to publish from Madras initially, he later set up a small printing press at Rajahmundry itself with the help of his friends, and published it from there. Through his monthly, Veeresalingam, would write strongly against corruption, superstitions, child marriages, that were prevalent in society then. In a way Veeresalingam was the pioneer of the social reform movements and Renaissance in Andhra Pradesh, that was influenced by the Bengal renaissance.

Veeresalingam, was however not merely an armchair preacher, he actually walked the talk and faced a whole lot of opposition for it. Widow remarriage was one of the causes Veeresalingam strived for sincerely, and he actually got it done, this inspite of being boycotted by the society and community at large. He took on the society head on, with his stance on widow remarriage and women's education, and was heavily criticized for it. His speeches at Vizianagaram Maharaja Girls High School in favor of widow remarriage, angered many conservatives. *"Who is this ignoble person? Has he been born in Rajahmundry for corrupting our values? Is he truly a Brahmin?"* were some of the abuses hurled against him. Veeresalingam pointing out the hypocrisy of people who encouraged prostitution in the name of tradition, but refused to accept widow remarriage, angered them even more. In effect Veeresalingam, showed them the mirror of their own hypocrisies, their double standards, their self-centeredness and that was not to their liking.

Many eminent men like Kokonda Venkataratnam pantulu, Ogirala Jaganadham, Dantuluri Narayana Ganapati Rao, strongly attacked Veeresalingam through articles and letters. However one letter did catch his

attention, it was from Brahmasri Darbha Brahmanandam, Deputy Tahsildar of Tiruvuru in the Krishna district. The letter spoke about a 12 year old child widow Gouramma in Tiruvur, and how her mother Sitamma was ready to get her married again. Veeresalingam bought Gouramma to Rajahmundry and kept her at home in the care of his wife.

He now began to search for a suitable groom for Gouramma and recalled one of his former students, Gogulapati Sriramulu, who was now working in Vizag Police Headquarters. Sriramulu immediately agreed to Veeresalingam's request out of sheer respect to his teacher. Sriramulu himself was a widower, having lost his wife sometime back, and was leading a lonely life.

The marriage was the talk of the town, no one even knew who the groom, though everyone knew the girl was Gouramma. The then Inspector General, of Rajahmundry Colonel Fortis, provided the security for the marriage. His friend Paida Ramakrishnayya provided the financial help needed for the marriage. And with Veeresalingam providing the necessary moral support the first widow remarriage was conducted on Dec 11, 1881 in Rajahmundry. It was a decision that would come at a terrible personal cost though, Veeresalingam was boycotted by the society, and so were the couple as well as the boy's parents. It did not deter him, in fact it made him more determined than ever, he swore to get as many widows remarried as he could. He was a man made of iron determination, never once did he swerve from the ideals he believed in. Friends like Pyda Ramakrishnayya, Atmoori Lakshmi Narasimham, Basavaraju Gavaraju, and his own students were his biggest strength. His wife Rajylakshamma(her name was changed after marriage) also proved to be a great source of support, and worked shoulder to shoulder with her husband in his cause. Till his death he conducted around 40 widow remarriages.

Apart from widow remarriage, the other cause that Veeresalingam held dear to his heart was women's education. He began the first Theist high school in Andhra Pradesh and later established the Hitakarini School at Rajahmundry in 1908. He also established the Town Hall in Rajahmundry, the first ever of

its kind in Coastal Andhra Pradesh. In the Theist school, students were made to recite a special prayer, in praise of the Supreme Being that was written by Veeresalingam himself. Apart from regular education, students were also taught to take up social service in his schools, he believed in value based learning. He donated his entire property for the Widows Home he set up at Rajahmundry as well as the Hitakarini Samaj, which oversaw most of the social activities. The Theist High School now has a Degree College too in Rajahmundry and he set up another college for women named after his wife Rajyalakshamma.

Veeresalingam, spoke of the importance accorded to women's education in Ancient and Medieval India, citing the examples of Raja Bhoja and Sri Krishna Deva Raya, whose courts had many prominent women poets and scholars. He spoke about how women like Sita, would sit along with Lord Ram in the assembly side by side, and how our country was at its most prosperous when women were equally respected with men. He claimed that India declined only when it began to treat the women like slaves, and did not educate them.

He was also a prolific writer, having an excellent command over Telugu, English and Sanskrit. He was the one who introduced essay, autobiography, novel into Telugu literature, and wrote in a style that was easy to understand. He authored many famous epic ballads in Telugu, some of which were Markandeya, Rasikajana Ranjanam. He also authored Abhagyopyakanam, a satirical poem, on the ills of society, and Saraswati Narada Vilapam, a satirical work on the pandits, who he felt were insulting Saraswati through their actions.

Among his other poems were Neethi Padhyalu, a series of poems, on morality and ethics, Stri Neethi Deepika, about how a woman should conduct herself. He also translated William Cowper's John Gilpin and Oliver Goldsmith's The Traveller into Telugu. Among the plays written by Veeresalingam were Chamatkara Ratnavali, a Telugu adaptation of Shakespeare's Comedy of Errors, Kalidasa's Shakuntala in Telugu, Satya Harischandra and Malvikagnamitram. He also wrote the first modern novel in Telugu, Rajashekara Charitamu(The History of Rajashekara) influenced by Oliver Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield, in which he exposed the existing social evils and superstitions. He also made good use of many Telugu

proverbs and sayings in this novel, and in a way laid the foundation for future writers. Another well-known novel of his was Satyaraja Purvadesa Yatralu(The Travels of Satyaraja in Purva Desa) a Telugu adaptation of Gulliver's Travels, again where he effectively made use of satire. Satyavathi Charitram which emphasized the importance of women's education and Chandramathi Charitram, about religious practices, were his other novels.

Veeresalingam also started the practice of exposing social evils, using social satire and conversation in his Viveka Vardhini monthly. Adopting humor, wit, and using the form of conversation he exposed many social evils be it casteism, child marriages, superstitions, corruption in the Government and prostitution. He also wrote around 190 essays in his magazines, about importance of women's education, reforming society, husband and wife relations. Apart from his own autobiography called "Sweeyacharitamu"(My Story), he also wrote a scholarly tome on the history of Telugu poets called "Andhra Kavula Charitra"(History of Andhra Poets). He also translated scientific works on Biology, Human Body into Telugu, and wrote commentaries on the Rig Veda. Apart from Viveka Vardini he also ran other magazines like Satihita Bodhini, Satya Samvardhini, Satya Dhoota, Chintamani and Telugu Janana.

Educationist, writer, journalist, social reformer, Kandukuri Veeresalingam Pantulu was truly a giant of a personality, a proud son of India, and an icon for all Telugu people. A man who pioneered social reforms as well as introduced new literary styles in Telugu literature, he was truly the "Father of the Telugu Renaissance". On May 27,1919, Kandukuri Veerasalingam left the world, physically, but his legacy would live on forever.

Maharshi Karve^[47]



The late 19th century and early 20th century had seen many reform movements in India, first starting from Bengal, which then began to spread to other states. The Bharat Ratna, now has become a bit of a joke, with the considerations being more political, than anything else. But there was a time, when the Bharat Ratna, did go to the truly deserving. One among them was Dhondo Keshav Karve, also known affectionately as Annasaheb.

“It is better to light a lamp in the darkness, than curse it” and that is what Karve did. For the 100 odd years of his life on earth, he lit the lamps in the lives of many a child widow, and women, fought for their emancipation. Like a lamp that keeps glowing till its end, to give light to others, Karve, lived for others, spread light in their lives and wore him out slowly.

Dhondo Keshav Karve, was born on April 18, 1858 to Keshava Pant and Laxmibai in Ratnagiri district, located in the Konkan. Though an aristocratic, well off family in the past, they had fallen on hard times, when he was born and were only saddled with debts to pay. Keshava Pant took up employment as a clerk near a landlord, in the small town of Koregaon, in Satara district. Dhondo grew up reading religious works like Gurucharitre and Shiva Leelamrita in his strictly religious household. Though growing up amidst poverty and struggle, Dhondo’s mother taught him never to compromise on self-respect.

Once when the Maharaja of Baroda was gifting away cows, along with 10 Rs to every Brahmin, he asked his mother, whether he could also go and accept. To which his mother replied.

You are not born in a family which seeks gifts! Among your forefathers there were many learned men; but they never accepted a gift from anybody.

Dhondo began his studies in Murud, a small seaside village in Ratnagiri district, from where he hailed, and it was there he met Vinayak Lakshman Soman, his teacher and also his mentor. Soman, guided Dhondo in his studies, and he also was a nationalist too. Soman felt that the village people should know what is going on in the rest of the country, and every evening he would make Dhondo read out the newspapers at the local temple.

Dhondo also set up a small shop with a capital of 800 Rs that he collected, however due to his lack of experience in maintaining accounts, the shop had to be closed down. It was a lesson he learnt, and in future ensured that whatever organization he worked with, the accounts would be managed carefully. Dhondo later wanted to appear for the examination that would enable him to be a teacher, and he had two choices, either Mumbai or Satara. Unable to travel all the way by sea to Mumbai, he choose to trek the long route to Satara that took 4 days, and involved crossing the Sahayadris. When he finally reached Satara, he was not allowed to write exam, as he was not 17 years old still. He however wrote it the next year at Kolhapur and passed the exam. He was already married at this time to Radhabhai. Wishing to have a better education, Karve, continued at Mumbai , and fortunately managed to get a scholarship, as he had come 5th in the entrance test. With his father passing away, Dhondo's brother Bhikaji, used to help him out. He himself took up tuitions to earn on his own. Finally after years of struggle, Dhondo Karve graduated from Elphinstone College in Mumbai in 1884.

At Mumbai he made friends with Narhari Pant, who also helped him to overcome his shyness in talking to other people. When Karve started working, he ensured at least a part of his income was set aside for charity. This was out of his own struggles with poverty, he knew firsthand how it was. Karve created a small fund which he used for development of Murud village, setting up roads there, as well as an English High School. Karve worked for some time at Elphinstone High School in Mumbai, but not liking the atmosphere there, he later joined St.Peter's School, and he would walk to

it daily. His wife Radhabai was a great source of support, and Karve ensured that boys from his hometown were not deprived of education. Many boys came from Murud, one of them was Raghunath Paranjpe, who later served as Indian ambassador to Australia. Radhabhai looked after those boys like her own sons, fed them well and took care of them. Unfortunately ill health took a toll on Radhabhai and she passed away on Nagpanchami Day. It was a major blow to Karve, who could not sleep that night.

On the request of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, Karve went to Fergusson College, Pune, where he joined as a Professor of Mathematics. Karve was aghast by the treatment meted out to widows those days. Often small girls hardly 10-12 years old were married off to 60-70 year old men, and when they died, they were condemned to a life of misery, with their heads shaved, and living alone in a dark room. These unfortunate women were blamed for their fate, as having accumulated the sins of a previous birth. When people asked Karve to marry again, he said “ I am a widower, if I marry another time, it shall be a widow only”. To which his friend’s father Balakrishna Joshi replied “If you have decided to marry a widow only, why not it be my daughter Godubai herself”. Godubai happened to be the sister of Karve’s closest friend Narhari Pant, and he gladly accepted the suggestion. Godubai was married to Karve, and he changed her name to Anandibai after marriage. However Karve’s act of marrying a widow was not liked by the more orthodox sections, it was the hot topic of discussion in many newspapers. When Karve along with his wife Anandibai, visited Murud, the villagers boycotted him and passed a resolution forbidding any one to have any interaction with him. Karve could not even speak with his mother, brother or sister, and Bhikaji was emotionally affected by this. Karve’s mother and brother did not visit his home, even when they came to town, nor was he informed when his mother was seriously ill. The courageous act of marrying a widow, came at a terrible personal cost for Karve.



In spite of society's rejection of Karve, and its harsh treatment, he did not develop any bitterness or ill will towards it. He knew that such sufferings had to be borne, when one set out to reform the injustice in society. Karve always felt that while society must be reformed, it should be a long, slow, process, instead of trying to push it forcibly. Karve went ahead with his mission for taking care of widows and he set up the Widow Marriage Association. Its main aim was to give a platform to those men who wished to marry widows and also to educate public about it. Karve did not believe in just pushing through with reforms, he felt that people also needed to be educated first. He sought to reform society, not destroy it, he wanted to improve it, not bring about further divisions.

He also felt that those widows who were casted out, needed to be rehabilitated and in 1896 he set up the Ananta Balikashram Association at Pune. In 1900, this Ashram was shifted to Hingne, a small village close to Pune, and many educated ladies like Parvatibhai Athavale, Kashibhai Deodhar volunteered to work there.

Many young widows were educated at this ashram, and also given assistance to make them live on their own. It was not an easy task for Karve, he had to personally walk to Pune from Hingne every day over 4 miles of slushy road, in cold, rain or hot sun. Carrying the articles needed for the Ashram on his back, he walked the entire route, every day for close to 2 years, at times often neglecting his own wife and children. He was the "brother" to all the women inmates of the Ashram, being there when they were ill or needed encouragement. The heavy work at the Balikashram meant Karve had to take a 3 year leave without pay from his post as Maths Professor at Fergusson, and dedicate his life for that. It was at a terrible personal cost for him, his children

did not have good clothes, they could not enjoy festivals like others, and even his own wife felt unhappy on this account. Karve himself mentioned in his autobiography

I always feel sorry that my wife and children suffered hardship because I did not give them sufficient attention. But I had no choice. On a number of days I walked to the Ashram shedding tears.

Orthodox people blamed Karve for destroying the purity of Hinduism, what was worse even many so called reformers did not give him the necessary support. They blamed him for setting up the Ashram due to which lesser people came forward for widow remarriage. He was attacked in most newspapers, yet Karve bore all of this with a stoic demeanor. In 1907, Karve set up the Mahila Vidyalalaya in Pune, to spread learning among women.

He set up two funds Bramacharya and Education, to ensure girls did not marry before 20 and that they attended school. Around that time, Karve observed that many missionaries, came in the guise of social work, and ended up converting people to Christianity. Karve felt that if he created a team of volunteers who would selflessly work for the Balikashram and Vidyalalaya, our society would flourish, and there would be no conversions.

Karve's philosophy was simple, why would people convert to other religions, if we can do the same service to them. And that is when he started the Institution for Selfless Service. By 1914, Karve left his job at Fergusson and dedicated his entire life to the Institution only. All his earnings would go to the institution, and only that much as was needed for his family ,would be kept aside. With his wife Anandibai herself looking after the affairs of the Mahilashram , he had all the support needed. In 1915 after reading a pamphlet on a Japanese women's university, he came up with the idea for an exclusive Women's university in India. It would have 3 main ambitions- to educate women and develop their personality, to enable them to play a better role as mothers and wives and to make them as citizens in nation building.

Touring Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore, Ahmedabad, Karve spoke about his vision for a women's university and began to raise funds for it. In 1916, the Women's University was established at Hinge, the Mahilashram was the campus. Karve again went all over the country, raising funds and managed to

raise 2 lakh rupees. The medium of instruction was in Marathi, as Karve, felt students could learn faster and easier that way. Sri Vithaldas Thackersey, was a wealthy philanthropist of Mumbai, and impressed by Karve's work, he donated a huge sum of 15 lakh rupees. The university was now renamed to Smt.Nathibhai Damodardas Thackersey Women's University, in honor of Vithaldas mother. By now Karve's greatness had been recognized universally and in April 1928, he was honored on his 71st birthday, when a road in Pune was named after him.



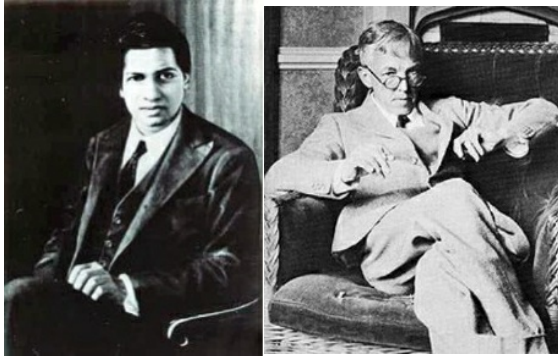
His selfless work, earned Karve the title of Maharshi, for leading the Indian women from darkness to light, from ignorance to knowledge and freeing them from the shackles of blind belief. Karve also went on a world tour in 1929, to Europe, America and Japan, he attended the International Education Conference at Elsinore, he met Einstein in Berlin where he exchanged views. During his tours he managed to raise a good amount of money for his institutions. Even though his University was well established, Karve did not rest on his laurels. At 78, he was still out there, this time spreading primary education in rural Maharashtra, for which he established the Primary Education Society.

Karve also fought against casteism, believed that all humans are equal, and founded the Society For Promotion of Equality when he was around 86 years.

Benares Hindu University conferred a honorary Doctorate on him, he was given the Padma Vibushan in 1955. On his 100th birthday in 1958, the Government awarded the Bharat Ratna to him. On 9th November, 1962 Dhondo Keshav Karve passed away, after living a full 100 years. His last words summed up the man.

If Swarajya (or self-government) is to lead to the welfare state, there is one 'mantra' (sacred utterance) – a mantra proclaimed in our ancient writings, the mantra of the consideration for the good of all.

The Man Who Knew Infinity



Way back in the 1914 Prof G.H.Hardy, a famous British mathematician, went to see his friend, who was recovering from an illness in a hospital, in London's Putney district. He remarked to him, that he had come in a cab which had a number 1729, and somehow that number seemed, dull and unremarkable to him. To which his friend immediately replied

“No Hardy, it's a very interesting number, it is the smallest number that can be expressed as the sum of two cubes in two different ways”.

To the mathematically challenged, it means that 1729 can be expressed as

$$1729 = 1728 + 1 = 12^3 + 1^3$$

$$1729 = 1000 + 729 = 10^3 + 9^3$$

This was an anecdote, which we often read as school students, and even during our mathematics classes. The friend here is of course Srinivasa Ramanujan, one of India's greatest scientists and one of the world's greatest mathematicians.



Ramanujan at Cambridge

Exactly a year back, Hardy received a letter from Ramanujan, then working as a clerk at Madras Port Trust. It was a 10 page letter, which had around 120 statements on theorems, continued fractions and number theory. Initially Hardy dismissed that letter as a crank, the ones mathematicians usually get, but a second look made him revise his opinion.

He discussed it over with his colleague, J.E.Littlewood, and their conclusions “the results must be true because, if they were not true, no one would have had the imagination to invent them”. The world of mathematics owes a great debt to India , because this is the land from which the basic theories of mathematics have originated. Aryabhatta who contributed the number-place value system and the concept of zero, as well as calculating the area of the triangle. Bhaskara who came up the concept of the decimal system. Halayudha who provided a clear description of the Pascal’s triangle. And between 1300-1600 AD, we had the Kerala school of Mathematics and Astronomy founded by Madhava of Sangamagrama which made significant contributions to the fields of infinite series and calculus. Ramanujan was born into an Iyengar family, in the town of Erode, Tamil Nadu on Dec 22, 1887.

His father was a clerk in a saree shop, while his mother was a devout Brahmin housewife. Theirs was a typical Tamil Brahmin household, pretty religious and orthodox. Growing up under his mother’s care and guidance he learnt about Indian tradition and puranas. His first brush with mathematics was in 1898, in Higher Secondary School. And that was when his prodigal talent came to being. At 11 years, he exhausted the mathematical knowledge of two college students, by 13 years he completely mastered the books on

advanced trigonometry written by S.L.Loney. At 14 years he was assisting his school in the logistics of assigning its 1200 odd students to 35 teachers. When he was 16 years old in 1903, Ramanujan, got a book from the library, through his friend, by the British mathematician, George.S.Carr, titled A Synopsis of Pure Mathematics, which was written in 1866. The book a collection of around 5000 theorems, stoked his curiosity, made him explore mathematics much more deeper.

The following year, Ramanujan, developed and investigated the Bernoulli numbers, calculated the Euler-Mascheroni constant up to 15 decimal places, winning him a new found respect among his peers. However his obsession with mathematics, made him neglect other subjects that he often ended up failing in most of them. He dropped out of college, and pursued maths research on his own. He made ends meet, by taking up tuition for school students. He later left for Villupuram, where he met the Dy. Collector, Mr Ramaswamy Iyer, who founded the Indian Mathematical Society, and applied for a clerical job, in the revenue department.

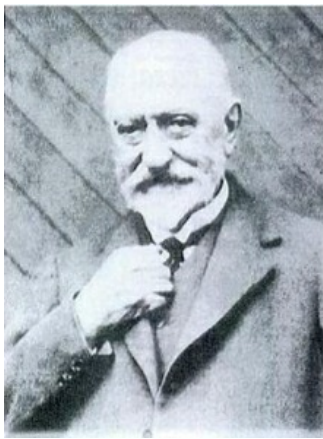
However Iyer was wonder struck by Ramanujan' s genius at mathematics, and sent him to Madras, with letters of introduction. In Iyer's own words.

Was struck by the extraordinary mathematical results contained in the notebooks. I had no mind to smother his genius by an appointment in the lowest rungs of the revenue department.

In Madras he got to meet the then Nellore district collector, R.Ramachandra Rao, who initially doubted that such a genius was original. However with persistence from Rao's friend, Rajagopalachari, he had a long discussion with Ramanujan over elliptic integrals and divergent series. Rao, who was also the Secretary for the Indian Mathematical Society, was now convinced about Ramanujan, and supported him financially. With the help from Ramaswamy Aiyer, Ramanujan managed to get his work published in Journal of the Indian Mathematical Society. He however had a rather erratic style of writing, often not too clear enough, and this made his work quite hard to understand for the average reader. He had the most innovative methods to solve problems, yet his not too clear writing style and precision, could make it hard for others to understand.



E.W. Middlemast, Ramanujan's math teacher



Francis Spring, Chairman of Madras Port Trust

Sir,

I understand there is a clerkship vacant in your office, and I beg to apply for the same. I have passed the Matriculation Examination and studied up to the F.A. but was prevented from pursuing my studies further owing to several untoward circumstances. I have, however, been devoting all my time to Mathematics and developing the subject. I can say I am quite confident I can do justice to my work if I am appointed to the post. I therefore beg to request that you will be good enough to confer the appointment on me.

The above application in 1912, along with a letter of recommendation from his Maths Professor, E.W. Middlemast at Presidency, ensured he got a job as a clerk in the Accounts Department of the Madras Port Trust. During his spare time, he would still continue his research in mathematics. He was

encouraged by his boss, Sir Francis Spring and his colleague, S.Narayana Iyer. Some of his friends like Spring, Narayana Iyer, Ramachandra Rao and Middlemast, helped him to send his work for Cambridge University, but he was rejected due to lack of formal educational qualifications. On 16 Jan, 1913, he wrote to Prof G.H. Hardy, who had the foresight to recognize Ramanujan's skills. Hardy was especially impressed by Ramanujan's work on continued fractions, claiming he had never seen such work before. One of Hardy's colleagues Neville later remarked "not one of his theorems, could have been set in the most advanced mathematical examination in the world". Hardy requested Ramanujan to come to Cambridge, but he refused, due to the then prevailing sentiment of not going to a foreign land, strongly rooted in Indian society.

For the time being, he was given a research grant at the University of Madras, where he did pioneering work on Frullani's 1821 integral theorem. Hardy's colleague Neville, again asked Ramanujan to come to Cambridge, and this time Ramanujan agreed. According to a popular anecdote, his mother had a dream, in which their family goddess Namagiri, commanded her not to stand in the way of her son's progress.

From 1913-18, Ramanujan spent 5 fruitful years in Cambridge, collaborating with Hardy and Littlewood, on many research projects. While Littlewood said that "this man was at least a Carl Gustav Jacob", Hardy remarked that he can be compared only with Euler or Jacobi. In March 1916, Ramanujan was awarded the Doctorate for his research on highly composite numbers. Hardy later remarked that this was one of the most unusual papers he had ever seen. Both of them had contrasting ways of working, Hardy followed the Western model of proof and rigor, and was an atheist. Ramanujan was a devout believer and often relied on intuition and gut feeling. It was the perfect mix of East and West. On Oct 1918, he became the first Indian to be elected as Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. In 1917, he became a member of the London Mathematical Society. In 1918 he became the second Indian to gain fellowship of the Royal Society, and one of its youngest members. Unfortunately, his poor health, ensured he could not live long, and he died in 1919, at an age of 32. His home state of Tamil Nadu celebrates his birthday as State IT day, while Government Arts College, Kumbakonam remembers the day as Ramanujan Day. It is fitting that his birthday should be declared as

National Mathematics Day by Government, a truly great Indian.

Dr.Yellapragada Subbarow[\[48\]](#)



12th of January, 1895- Bhimavaram, a small coastal town in Andhra Pradesh, it was the period, when a young monk from Calcutta, by the name of Swami Vivekananda, had electrified the audience in America, through his address at Chicago on Hinduism, two years earlier. Coincidentally, the young monk, Swami Vivekananda, was also born on January 12th, the same date as a certain Yellapragada Subbarow, would be. While most Indians would recognize Swami Vivekananda, the name of Yellapragada Subbarow, would certainly not ring a bell for many.

But yet if one were to compile a history of medicine, in the world, the name of Dr.Subbarow, would be standing right up there along with other greats like Alexander Fleming, Ronald Ross. Subbarow made some of the most significant discoveries in the field of medicine, yet forget about ordinary people, even in the scientific community, his name is not too well known.

1994, Surat– The year a deadly plague struck the city, and parts of Maharashtra too. A 3rd generation tetracycline called Doxycycline helped in combating the plague epidemic, and controlling it. The tetracycline's were the effort of Yellapragada Subbarow' s untiring efforts, and in what was the centenary year of his birth, it was his own way of paying back to his own country.

A country, Subbarow, had left in 1922 for the US, and where he did his work, till he passed away in 1948, just a year after independence, at a very young age of 53. And yet, there was no stauncher nationalist than this man, a devout Gandhian, who wore Khadi surgical dress in response to the Swadesh call. An act, that earned the displeasure of his surgery professor M.C. Bradfield at Madras Medical College, and for which he was given the lesser LMS degree, instead of the MBBS degree, in spite of the fact that he was a brilliant student. It meant he could not enter the Madras Medical service, and had to settle for a job as an Anatomy lecturer at Dr.Lakshmipathi's Ayurveda College in Madras. It was during his stint there, that he developed an interest in Ayurveda, and began to do a whole lot of research on that topic. Subbarow came from a rather humble background, his mother had to pawn her jewelry to get him educated, and it was the financial support from Kasturi Satyanarayana Murthy that enabled him to study, who later would also be his father in law.

In 1923, his father in law once again supported him financially, when he was to leave to US for higher studies, as also the assistance from Malladi Satyalingam Naicker Charities in Kakinada. It would be pertinent to note however that Subbarow, was allowed admission to Harvard Medical School as a "physician" and his qualifications were cited as a "chemist". These were the two professions that were exempt from ban on immigration of Indians into US, as they were not Caucasians. Even those Indians in US, who had all the legal requirements to become a citizen, were not allowed to become US citizens. Though Subbarow, could be able to get his 2 year old student visa extended, the fear of being deported back to India for any minor infraction, always hung over him. During WWII, Subbarow, had to carry an Alien Registration card around, report his address to every 3 months in Dept of Justice, Washington. In fact when Subbarow, was working on supervision of processing of blood albumin for supply to Navy, he had to get a special clearance in 1942.

Even at Harvard, Subbarow, got a position only as a junior faculty member after he finished his diploma there. But it was there along with Cyrus Fiske, that he made one of the most significant discoveries of our times. During the 1920's many scientists were trying to understand the chemical stores in our body, where energy was stored, and which the body draws upon, whenever needed. To put it in simpler terms, how exactly does the body store the

energy we get from eating, and which we would be needing later on. It was Subbarow along with Fiske, who discovered phosphocreatine and adenosine triphosphate (ATP), two chemicals in our body that store energy.

Whenever the body needs energy ATP is converted into ADP(adenosine diphosphate) while it gets replenished by phosphocreatine while the body rests. His work demonstrated the importance of phosphorous in our body, and also how to estimate the phosphorous content in living organisms. The Fiske-SubbaRow method of estimating phosphorous is used to date by most biologists around the world. Subbarow now began to be quoted in most biochemistry publications around the world.

However when Harvard denied him a regular faculty position, Subbarow, left for Lederle Laboratories(now a part of Wyeth, owned by Pfizer) in 1940, where he did some of his most significant work. It was at Lederle, that Subbarow, began to work on discovering antibiotics that had a wider range of cures than, the available penicillin and streptomycin. This in a way led to discovery of polymyxin widely used even today in cattle-feed and aureomycin, the first of the various tetracycline antibiotics which all of us used at one time or other. The tetracycline antibiotics played a major role in saving millions of patients, all over the world during the last century. Aureomycin, the first tetracycline antibiotic discovered by Subbarow, was introduced in 1948, the same year Subbarow passed away at a very young age of 53. Aureomycin was effective against both gram-positive and gram-negative germs, making it much more powerful than Penicillin or Streptomycin.

Another of 3rd generation tetracycline's, doxycycline, was cleared as a preventive drug for malaria, and was used by UN Assistance Mission in East Timor. In 1945, Subbarow along with his team at Lederle, synthesized Folic acid from liver and a microbial source, which would play a role in curing tropical sprue. For Subbarow, it was a personal achievement too, he had seen two of his brothers fall prey to the disease, and he himself came close to death there. This discovery was found to cure many anemias, and in 1988, US Govt ordered all grain products to be enriched with folic acid to prevent spinal cord defects for newborns.

“Do you know that methotrexate was discovered by an Indian?”

One of the most important anti-cancer drugs methotrexate was synthesized again by Subbarow. This drug is primarily used for alleviating suffering from Burkitt's Lymphoma, and was one of the very first cancer chemotherapy agents.

Apart from this, methotrexate is also used for childhood leukemia, many forms of adult cancers, and to control rheumatoid arthritis and psoriasis. It's ironic that a man who has made such seminal discoveries in the world of medicine and probably saved many lives has not really got the recognition due for him. During his tenure at Lederle, as Director of Research, another important discovery Subbarow made was on Hetrazan the cure for Filariasis. It was primarily the outcome of a project that aimed to protect US soldiers fighting during the War in the Pacific against malaria and filariasis. Filariasis was one of the most serious diseases during that time that led to the deformity causing elephantiasis. Subbarow's discovery of Hetrazan, went a long way in combating this disease, which now has been adopted by WHO as a key element of its campaign against elephantiasis.

Dr. Subbarow passed away in 1948, at a very young age of 53, a naturalized citizen of US, something he got after a long period of struggle. He had a lot more to offer to the medical world, and in fact he might have just come back to India, just then newly independent, and maybe even played a greater role too. But as Doron Antrim observed in 1950-“You've probably never heard of Dr. Yellapragada Subbarow. Yet because he lived you may be alive and are well today. Because he lived you may live longer.” In effect Dr. Subbarow was a true Karmayogi, one who did his work to the best of his ability and selflessly. A man who straddled two different worlds, an American citizen with an Indian heart. A man who made some of the most seminal contributions to the field of medicine, and saved innumerable lives. In essence Dr. Subbarow, epitomized the Hindu saying “Manava Seva Madhava Seva”(Service to humanity is service to God). On his birth anniversary, it is essential that more Indians should be aware of the contribution of this great soul.

Operation Polo

“The vultures have resigned, I don’t know what to do” [\[49\]](#)



Sept 17, Hyderabad– The bespectacled and unassuming lawyer received the invite for a meeting at 4PM, and he broke out in a wry smile. He could afford to do so, the man who had called him for the meeting, was no ordinary person. Time magazine in its February 1937 edition, had put him on the cover page and called him the world’s richest man, a man who used the 100 million \$ worth Jacob’s Diamond as a paper weight, and whose personal fortune ran into billions. Along with Baroda, Mysore, Gwalior, Jammu and Kashmir, he was one of those princely rulers, who had the privilege of receiving a 21 gun Salute. His Exalted Highness Sir Mir Osman Ali Khan Siddiqi GSCI, GBE Asaf Jah VII as he was officially called, presided over a kingdom that was around 215,339 sq. km in area, the largest of all the princely states in India. The State of Hyderabad stretched from Aurangabad in the North West to Mahbubnagar in the South East, from Adilabad in the North East to Raichur in the South West. It covered the present day Marathwada in Maharashtra, Northern Karnataka, and the Telangana region. It had a population of 16.34 million as per the 1941 census, the majority of whom were Hindu, around 85%, with Muslims making up 12% and the rest being Christians, Sikhs, and Parsis. Though predominantly Telugu speaking around 48%, it had significant population of Marathi(26.4%), Kannada(12.3%) and Urdu(10.3%) speakers.

The bespectacled, unassuming lawyer on the other hand hailed from a relatively humble family, in Broach, Gujarat, and was educated in Baroda, known to be excellent at academics too. Kanhaiyalal Maneklal Munshi^[50], aka K.M.Munshi, was a student of Aurobindo Ghosh, at Baroda, later made a name for himself as a successful lawyer, in Bombay, and was also a well-known writer too. Starting off as a revolutionary, he later took active part in the Bardoli Satyagraha along with Sardar Patel, and one of his more well-known achievements was founding of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan in 1938. A great admirer of Sardar Patel, after independence he was appointed as Agent General to Hyderabad State, to negotiate its accession to the Indian Union.

There was a good reason why Sardar had chosen Munshi for the responsibility, he had earlier been the Home Minister in Bombay from 1937-39, and handled the communally charged situation there well. Munshi had been living in virtual house arrest, was treated with disdain and suspicion by the Nizam's Government and was living in some buildings that belonged to the Indian Army. It was a vindication of sorts, for Munshi, that the Nizam who till then had ignored him, was now seeking to have an audience with him.

The day before, the Nizam had demanded the resignation of his Prime Minister, Laik Ali and his entire cabinet. And when Munshi met him, the worlds richest and till then one of the most powerful men, declared with an air of resignation and helplessness-“The vultures have resigned, I don't know what to do”.

“In November last [1947], a small group which had organized a quasi-military organization surrounded the homes of my Prime Minister, the Nawab of Chhatari, in whose wisdom I had complete confidence, and of Sir Walter Monkton, my constitutional Adviser, by duress compelled the Nawab and other trusted ministers to resign and forced the Laik Ali Ministry on me. This group headed by Kasim Razvi had no stake in the country or any record of service behind it. By methods reminiscent of Hitlerite Germany it took possession of the State, spread terror ... and rendered me completely helpless.”– The Nizam in his radio speech, Sept 23,1948

The Nizam after Operation Polo, quite often positioned himself as a helpless victim of the Razakars, a quasi-military organization, founded by Qasim

Rizvi that wanted to integrate Hyderabad with Pakistan, and run it as per the Sharia. Some others too have come up with the position, that the Nizam was essentially a decent, well-meaning man, who was helpless before the Razakar's storm trooper style tactics. While there is some amount of truth in that, the fact is that the Razakars were the Nizam's own creation, or as someone put it his "Frankenstein creation". To understand the genesis of the Razakars, one needs to go back further to the Telangana rebellion that broke out in 1946.

For a long time, the rural parts of Hyderabad State, were divided into what was called as Samsthanams, essentially pieces of feudal territories, under the oppressive rule of the Reddy, Velama doras in Telangana, the Deshmukhs in other regions, who ran a brutal and often oppressive rule. They owned most of the land, and collected the taxes from the poor peasantry, and keeping them in perpetual bonded labor(called as Vetti Chakiri). These landlords were the masters of their own land, and had a good bonding with the Nizam and his nobles.

The Nizam on the other hand, hardly had any control over these lands, and let the Doras run it as per their own free whims, it was pretty much a quid pro quo arrangement. It was an unlikely person, who would spark off the Telangana revolt, a doughty woman activist called Chakali Illamma, who fought against the local Zamindar's attempt to take over 4 acres of her land. That sparked off a revolt[\[51\]](#) all over Telangana, with the communists jumping into the fray, and liberating many villages from the feudal lords.

The revolt against the Telangana doras that essentially was against bonded labor and exploitation saw the Nizam himself become the target. To the villagers and activists, the exploitative landlords, were essentially stooges of the Nizam himself. One of the more popular revolutionary songs of that period was "Bandenaka Bandi Katti, Padaharu Ballu Katti, Nenosthanu koduka ra Nizam sarakaroda". Loosely translated it means "Tying one cart after another, and 16 carts in tow, I am coming for you stooge of the Nizam".

Rural discontent was high against the Nizam, on one side the Communist leaders like Sundarayya, Ch.Rajeswara Rao , on the other side, Congress leaders like Swami Ramananda Teertha, P.V.Narasimha Rao, rising up against his rule.

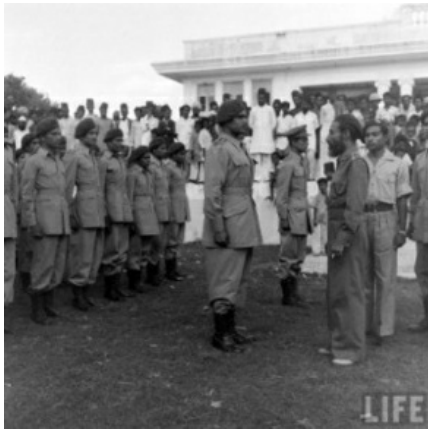
There was another reason too for the simmering discontent, in spite of the fact that Hindus constituted 85% of the population in Hyderabad State as per 1941 census, with Muslims making up 12%, they were severely underrepresented in the Government. The Army had 1268 Muslim officers and only 421 Hindu officers, in strength of 1765, most of the highly paid officers were Muslim, and the Nizam and his nobles owned 40% of the land. Faced with growing discontent, and also the fear of a Hindu uprising, the Nizam gave a free hand to Qasim Rizvi to set up the Razakars, to counter it.



Qasim Rizvi, the Razakar founder

Qasim Rizvi, an advocate from Latur, had joined the Majlis-e-Ittehad-ul Muslimeen(MIM), which was founded by Nawab Mahmood Nawaz Khan Qiledar, on the advice of the Nizam himself, and its first meeting was held in 1927. The aim of the MIM was to establish a Muslim dominion rather than integration with India, it was however under Bahadur Yar Jung, that it acquired the radical character. Yar Jung wanted Hyderabad to be a separate Islamic state independent of India, governed by Sharia. Known for his oratory, and a close friend of Mohd.Ali Jinnah and Mohd.Iqbal, he was one of the leading advocates of Pakistan. Rizvi by then had already risen in the ranks, and was a close confidante to Bahadur Yar Jung, and when the latter

died suddenly in 1944, he took over the MIM. He then set up the Razakars, a fanatic, dreaded militia, that was the equivalent of Mussolini's Black Shirts and Hitler's Storm troopers, and this had the blessings of the Nizam. The Nizam encourages Rizvi and the Razakars, in order to counter the rising discontent among the rural population, and also the protests by the Communists and the Hyderabad State Congress.



Rizvi with the Razakars



The Razakars

The Razakars unleashed a reign of terror in Hyderabad State, with their storm-trooping acts. Villages were attacked in the middle of night, and after rounding up the mostly Hindu residents, they were massacred en masse. There have been eye witness accounts from some villagers, who managed to escape the Razakar's by playing dead, often having to lie still on a pile of corpses. In some cases, the villagers fled to the nearest jungle or one of the

numerous uninhabited mud forts to escape the Razakars. Rape, arson, torture, looting, was common tactics by the Razakars to intimidate the population. Much as the Nizam later protested he was a mere pawn, in the hands of the Razakars, the fact is that he was responsible for funding them, and also providing them arms.

It was a Frankenstein he had created, with encouragement from Jinnah, Qasim Rizvi soon became more powerful than the Nizam. He was not just against Hindus, even those Muslims who did not favor integration with Pakistan, and wanted to be a part of India were targeted. A young Muslim journalist Shoebullah Khan who favored integration with India, was murdered. The Nawab of Chattari, Mir Mohd Said Khan was forced out by Rizvi in favor of the more fanatical Mir Laki, and also a close friend of Rizvi. Sir Walter Monckton, the advisor to the Nizam, resigned, in protest against the Razakar attacks on him. It was not for nothing Sardar Patel told the Nizam, after his surrender, when the latter said “To err is human”, “Yes it may be true, but errors always have consequences”.

August 15, 1947- India had become independent, and the Hyderabad State Congress leaders celebrated it by hoisting the national flag, they were promptly arrested by the Nizam’s police. The Nizam had earlier requested the British Government for Hyderabad State to be an independent constitutional monarchy, under the Commonwealth, which however was rejected. The Nizam refused to sign the Instrument of Accession, and instead declared Hyderabad as an independent nation. For Sardar Patel, the existence of an independent country right in the heart of India, was too great a risk, he could never allow it, and he was determined to integrate it, even if force was needed. Lord Mountbatten advised Sardar to avoid force, and try seeking a peaceful solution to the issue. It was then that the Central Govt came up with the Standstill Agreement, in November, 1947, which only sought an assurance, that Hyderabad would not accede to Pakistan, and status quo would be maintained. In accordance with the Standstill Agreement, K.M. Munshi was appointed the Indian Government’s envoy and Agent General to Hyderabad. I had already mentioned how Munshi was treated by the Nizam’s Government, not even getting a proper accommodation.

The major issue though was something more serious, hardly was the Standstill Agreement signed, when the Nizam, passed two ordinances in

quick succession. One was the restriction on export of precious minerals from Hyderabad to India, and another was declaring Indian currency as not legal tender in the state, both of them in violation of the Standstill Agreement.

Meanwhile, the Government of Hyderabad had not implemented a single undertaking given by them. No announcement with regard to the loan to Pakistan as promised by Laik Ali had been made; the Currency Ordinance had not been modified, while the ban on the export of precious metals and oilseeds continued to operate. No step, as promised by Laik Ali, in respect of the reconstitution of the Nizam's Executive Council had been taken. The Razakars, so far from being banned, had become an intolerable nuisance. Border raids showed no signs of abatement. Up to this time we had only tried to press our point of view informally upon the Government of Hyderabad. But now the Government of India decided that we should bring the breaches of the Standstill Agreement to their notice officially. Accordingly, on 23 March, I addressed a letter to the President of the Nizam's Executive Council which was sent to Munshi to be delivered personally to Laik Ali.- V.P.Menon.[52]

On the other hand, the Nizam used this Standstill Agreement to request world leaders, the UN and other Muslim nations to intervene and assist in Hyderabad's independence attempts. He requested for intervention of UN, and also arbitration by the US President Harry Truman, both the efforts in vain though. While Churchill and the Conservatives supported the Nizam, the then Labor Govt headed by Clement Atlee decided to keep hands off approach on the whole issue. The tipping point however came when the Nizam's Govt, advanced a loan of Rs 20 cr to Pakistan, in form of Govt of India securities.

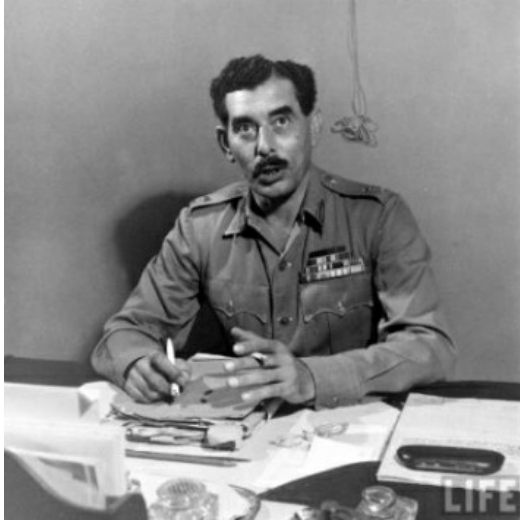
In effect, the Nizam egged on by Rizvi and Laik Ali, was openly cocking a snook at the Indian Govt. On the other hand, the Razakars had become a law unto themselves, carrying out a terror campaign of ethnic cleansing, torture, rape, loot and arson, against Hindus and Muslims who were in favor of integration with India.

Why did the Nizam and his men have so much confidence on themselves?

Firstly they felt that even if India were to resort to an economic blockade, Hyderabad State had enough capability to stand on its own. They felt that a newly independent India did not have enough military firepower to undertake any action. Also even if India, did take action, all the Muslim nations would automatically come forward to help it, and the UN would be forced to intervene. Hyderabad state radio, announced that if India were to invade Hyderabad, some thousands of Pathans would come to the rescue of Hyderabad.

And above all, you had Qasim Rizvi, the Razakar's chief, who declared that if India were to attack Hyderabad " Nothing but the bones and ashes of 10.5 million Hindus would be found". Sardar Patel categorically replied back "If you threaten us with violence, swords will be met with swords". There was a section in the Indian Govt too, that was apprehensive of retaliatory large scale communal violence, against Muslims in other parts of India, should the Hindus face the brunt of any communal violence in Hyderabad.

Also fears of Pakistan attacking India, and the Nizam's own air-force bombing other cities in India, were there. The Nizam too was busy arming himself, with the help of the Portugese in Goa , Pakistan and a certain Australian arms dealer called Sidney Cotton, who ran missions into Hyderabad. Lord Mountbatten in the meanwhile had left India in June, 1948, and that was a huge blow to the Nizam, who was hoping he would somehow help him out. Matter of fact, years later, after Operation Polo, when the Nizam's daughter in law Durrushevar, met Mountbatten at a party, she coldly fired at him "You have let us down". There still was resistance to Patel's idea, from the then Commander in Chief of the Indian Army, Sir Roy Bucher, who felt that Hyderabad would be an additional front for the Indian forces already facing a conflict in Kashmir, but Sardar put his foot down.



El Edroos Commander of Nizam's Army

Operation Polo[\[53\]](#)

Finally when the Nizam's Govt, sent their external Affairs Minister, Nawab Moin Nawaz Jung to the UN Security Council, in September 1948, Sardar felt that there was no other alternative but to invade Hyderabad. After making a careful study, the decision was finally communicated to the Southern Command, who recommended September 13 as the best date to start the operations. The official Hyderabad State Army was actually more or less a sub unit of the Razakars, consider this, the total strength of the Nizam's Army was 22,000 while the Razakar's made up around 200,000, clearly a case of the tail wagging the dog. The Army was led by El Eldroos, a close confidante of the Nizam, of Arab Hadrami origin, who had fought in both the World Wars, however an utterly inept commander and strategist to boot. The Hyderabad Army actually was more a collection of mercenaries, which included Arabs, Rohillas, Pathans and Muslims from Uttar Pradesh.

Though the Razakars made up the bulk of the Army, only 25 % of them were armed with modern weaponry, the rest used swords and outdated equipment. What it meant is that while the Razakars could harass and bully, hapless, defenseless civilians, they just were not equipped for actual combat.



Gen J.N.Chaudhary and Lt.Gen Rajendrasinhji Jadeja.

The Indian Army was commanded by Gen. Jayanto Nath Chaudhari, a graduated from Kolkata's St Xavier's nicknamed as Mucho, and who had fought in the deserts of Africa as well as the Middle East during WWII. The final plan for Operation Polo(so called because of the large number of polo grounds in Hyderabad then), was formulated by Lt.Gen. Eric Goddard, GOC of the Southern Command of India and named after him. It was however Lt.Gen Sri Rajendrasinhji Jadeja, who belonged to the Jamnagar Royal family, who actually supervised the operation when he took over as GOC of the Southern Command, from Goddard. The plan envisaged two thrusts into Hyderabad, one from the Western side by Gen. J.N.Chaudhari that would begin from Sholapur, and had 2 infantry brigades, one armored brigade and a strike force. The other thrust from the Eastern side, would be led by Gen.A.A.Rudra that would start from Vijayawada, which consisted of the Gurkha Rifles, 4 Infantry Battalions, and one squadron of the Poona 17th Horse.

On Day 1, September 13th, a fierce battle was fought at Naldurg Fort near Solapur, where the 2nd Sikh Infantry, managed to secure the fort, after resistance from 1 Hyderabad Infantry. There was resistance in the towns of Jalkot and Tuljapur from the Razakars, the latter town saw a 2 hr long battle that finally saw the Razakars losing out. On the Eastern front, there was major resistance from two armored units of the Hyderabad State Army, consisting of Humbers and Staghounds, before they were overpowered and managed to reach the town of Kodad in Nalgonda district. From the other end, Hospet was captured from the Razakars, while the 5/5 Gurkha Rifles

managed to secure a vital bridge over the Tungabhadra River.

On Day 2, Osmanabad faced an attack from the Gurkha Rifles and an 8th cavalry squadron, as they attacked the city. There was heavy street to street fighting between the Indian army and the Razakars, who put up a fierce resistance, before the town finally fell. Aurangabad was attacked by six infantry and cavalry columns under Maj.Gen.D.S.Brar, and soon the civil administration surrendered. Jalna fell on Day 3, Sept 15, while air strikes by the Indian Air Force, cleared the town of Suryapet in Nalgonda, which fell to the Indian Army. Zahirabad fell to the Indian Army on Day 4, Sept 16, though they still kept facing ambush attacks from the Razakars.

Finally on September 17th, 1948, the Indian Army entered the town of Bidar now in Karnataka, while another column took over the town of Chityal, in Nalgonda district, around 60 KM from Hyderabad. With Hingoli in Maharashtra, also falling to the Indian Army, the Nizam knew he had lost the game. The Hyderabad State Army was utterly routed, with 490 dead and 122 injured, and around 1647 becoming prisoners. The Razakar's fared even worse, they lost 1373 of their men, and 1911 were captured, and with it their pipe dream of hosting an independent Hyderabad too. The Nizam announced the ceasefire, at 5 PM IST, disbanded the Razakars and allowed the Indian Army entry into Hyderabad.

On September 18, El Edroos, met J.N.Chaudhuri and surrendered to him, while Qasim Rizvi was arrested by the Indian Government. Laik Ali was kept in house arrest, at Begumpet, from where he managed to escape in 1950. It also effectively ended the 235 yr. old rule of the Asaf Jah Dynasty, which at its peak had extended from Malwa in the North to Trichy in the South, and was the last vestige of the Mughal rule in India.

Reazang La-Lest We Forget[\[54\]](#)

“If you know the enemy yourself, you need not fear the result of hundred battles,

If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained, you will also suffer

defeat,

If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle”.

-Sun Tzu



In the annals of Indian Military history, La, would be mentioned in the same breath as other “to the last man standing” battles like Masada, Alamo, Charge of the Light Brigade and Thermopylae. Or if we take a more recent example, Battle of Kasserine Pass in North Africa, during World War II, where the Allied forces went down, fighting to the Axis forces.

The Backdrop

The 1962 India China war, an event that most of us would like to forget, one of the most ignominious chapters in the history of India, post-Independence. China was seeking to assume leadership of the Afro Asian nations, and it saw India as a serious rival, which was doing the same through NAM. More than that, India granting asylum to the Dalai Lama, its tacit support to the revolt in Tibet, was seen in a not too positive light by China.

Also China never really accepted the McMahon line that served as the boundary between the two nations. 1962 was not the first time, China had

attacked India, there had been border skirmishes earlier too in 1959, seizing a border post at Longju in the North East, and another being an attack at Konga, around 80 Km straight into Indian territory. If we take a look at the Sun Tzu quotation, the fact is China, knew India, well, and India, knew neither itself nor China. It was no wonder that the '62 war was a rout.

The Chinese did not just stop with some border skirmishes, they actually built roads right up to Spanggur Gap in the West, and Walong in the East. India on the other hand was caught napping literally, to face its worst defeat ever. But then even in moments of darkness, there have been moments that shone through, and during the '62 war, it was the to the last man standing resistance at Rezang La, against all odds, that to date, has been one such moment.



But why Rezang La? What was its importance? To understand it take a look at the above figure(source: Bharat-Rakshak.com), Chushul valley where Rezang La is located, was pretty much a barren, sandy strip. Around 40 Km long, and just 5.6 km at its widest, Chushul is located at an altitude of 14,230 ft. surrounded by towering mountains. On the northern side is the spectacular Pangong Tso lake, while the eastern and western parts are filled with high mountain peaks. In the South there was an all-weather airfield, and the east had the Spanggur Gap. Chushul was considered strategically important, and much before the war, itself, China, had built roads that could carry tanks all the way up to Spanggur. Chushul was the main nodal point for all Indian military outposts in this sector, and its defense was seen as vital.

13 Kumaon and the Ahirs.

The 13 Kumaon was raised on August 5, 1948 by Lt.Col. H.C.Taylor, with around 50% of Kumaonis and Ahirs from Haryana. In 1956, this was made a 100% Ahir battalion, on the suggestion of the then Regiment Colonel, K.S.Thimayya, and the process was complete by March 1960. The Ahirs claim to be Somvanshi Kshatriyas, one of the major Yadav clans, it is for this reason, and that Ahir and Yadav are used interchangeably. One of the influential communities in Haryana, they reside mostly in the Rewari-Narnaul area, and were identified as one of the martial races by the British. One of the most important Ahir heroes was Rao Tula Ram, a key leader of the 1857 Rebellion, who played a key role in checking the British advance into South west Haryana, and also assisted the rebels in Delhi.



Prior to 1962, the 13 Kumaon had experience, fighting the Naga counter insurgency in the Naga Hills led by the self-styled leader, Kito Sema.

The battalion had shown its prowess, by capturing weapons, many self-styled generals and commanders of the underground Naga Army, and also destroying their HQ. It was the tough counter insurgency operations in Naga Hills(now Nagaland), that made 13 Kumaon a battle hardened unit, ready for actual combat. Prelude 13 Kumaon had already moved to Baramulla for training, at high altitude, in anticipation of the war ahead. By Oct 2, 1962 they had moved to Leh along with 114 Infantry Brigade, and was scheduled to go to Chusul by March 1963. With intelligence reports of an impending Chinese attack on Chusul, the 3rd Infantry Division was raised hurriedly. By Oct 13, the B and C companies of 13 Kumaon were sent to Chushul, and took charge of Mugger Hill and Rezang La Pass. The D company of 13 Kumaon, occupied the vital Spanngur Gap, while the Battalion HQ was located in the High Ground. Under Major Shaitan Singh, 3 Platoons were deployed at Rezang La, one on the Northern side under Jemadar Surja, another in the pass

under Jemadar Hari Ram, and south under Jemadar Ram Chandar. The Company C HQ was under the charge of Naik Ram Kumar Yadav along with 3 Inch Mortar. The Chinese had 3 ways to reach Chushul, one was the pretty much circuitous route from Khurnak Fort through Leh, and only a battalion with support of animal transport could move. The other route was from Rudok to Chushul, which had a class 9 road and the 3rd approach was from Rudok to Chushul via Rezang La. The 114 Infantry was given the task of defending Chushul for as long as it could from the enemy forces, quite ambitious, considering its lack of troops and fire power.

Rezang La was the pass that lay on the South Eastern approach to Chushul, it was being manned by C Company of 13 Kumaon under the leadership of Major Shaitan Singh. Located at an altitude of 16,000 feet above sea level, it was roughly around 3 km long and 2 km wide. The fact is that the troops were ill prepared for the defense, with no mechanized digging equipment, they had to manually dig defenses in the rocky terrain.

The hard job, coupled with the lack of oxygen, the biting cold, made the task of the men, even tougher, many of whom were not yet acclimatized to the conditions. Add to it, the local ponies and yaks carrying the woolen clothing, rations, and sleeping bags had not yet arrived. There was another serious issue, the pass was surrounded by high mountain peaks, which were an impediment to artillery shells, and this denied them a proper artillery backup. No artillery support, using .303 rifles which were of WWII vintage, no proper woolen clothing and ancient radio sets, which could not communicate due to frozen batteries, that was the state of the Indian side. In sharp contrast, the Chinese had 7.62 SLR's (Self Loading Rifles) and the troops were acclimatized to the conditions. Also the Chinese troops consisted of locals from Singkiang, who were familiar with the region and climate, while the Indian side was made of Ahirs, who coming from North Indian plains, and deployed in high altitude for the first time, were totally unfamiliar with the environment. The unit also did not have sufficient time to stock and place out mines, and there was also no mutual support for the sub units, due to the wide spaces. The lack of artillery support due to the topography, and not enough mines to slow down enemy advances, would be a major stumbling block. On Oct 24, Order was issued to fight to the last man standing, there was nothing else to do, considering the inadequate preparations.



Shaitan Singh

The Battle After a heavy snowstorm, on Nov 17, at 2 AM on Nov 18, movements of Chinese soldiers were observed by Lance Naik Brij Lal, who rushed back to inform to Platoon 8 HQ. Soon the entire C company was alerted, and Major Shaitan Singh, confirmed that all the unit soldiers were at their positions. The Chinese plan was to launch a massive surprise attack, but it was coming to naught, with the C company on full alert. At 5 AM, the Chinese soldiers were spotted by all the Ahirs manning the defenses, and the first round of firing through LMG's, MMGs and mortars began.

The Chinese launched 4 attacks trying to overwhelm through a wave formation, but the spirited resistance, meant many of them lay dead in the gullies. The casualties were mounting on the Indian side too, with many Ahirs falling to Chinese bullets. Naik Chandgi Ram, launched a counter attack on the invading Chinese, using his bayonet, killing around 6-7 before he fell fighting. The first wave of Chinese attacks were beaten back by 5:45 AM.

Rezang La was not turning out to be the walk in the park that they had expected it to be. Understanding that a full frontal attack was not effective, the Chinese began to use their artillery fire power, against the Indian forces that had virtually limited artillery. It was an unequal contest, the superior Chinese artillery, overwhelmed most of the Indian positions, the Command Center was shelled. Major Shaitan Singh had the unenviable task of regrouping his remaining officers, to take on the Chinese invaders, who by

now were beating down furiously. Shaitan Singh, moved from one gun position to another, exhorting his depleting defenses to keep fighting till the last man. He was hit by LMG fire on the arm, but that did not deter him as he kept firing at the enemy, with whatever limited resources he had. Another burst of enemy fire, hit Shaitan Singh in the stomach, and he was pulled to safety by Phool Singh and Jai Narain Singh. He ordered his men to leave him, and rush to the defense of the Battalion, and he slowly froze to death with a grenade in his hand. Yes the true leader who fought until the last, ensuring that the enemy would not get a walk over. On the other side, 1/8 GR fought valiantly in Spanggur Gap, with artillery back up and tanks destroying the enemy advances. Lt. Goswami gave ample to the defense of Gurung Hill under Capt P.L.Kher, losing his own legs due to frost bite, would be decorated with a Mahavir Chakra later on. Havildar Major Harpool Singh, led 3 other survivors to stop the enemy onslaught before falling, while Naik Ram Kumar, held back the invading Chinese soldiers with his own .303 rifle, before he was badly injured in a grenade attack. It was Ram Kumar, who would narrate the story of Rezang La, to the higher authorities.

As the last round was fired, and the last soldier fell, a shroud of silence enveloped Rezang La, no reinforcements could be provided to the C Company nor any was asked for either. Ceasefire was declared 3 days later on Nov 21, 1962, but the sacrifice and raw heroism shown by C Company against all odds would never be forgotten. The body of Major Shaitan Singh was discovered in February 1963, still clutching his hand grenade, and so were bodies of around 96 soldiers, still clinging to their weapons that had run out of bullets. It was heroism against all odds, an outnumbered, battalion, with outdated equipment, holding back a much larger and better equipped invading force.

These 114 men who laid down their lives, ensured that the Chinese side would lose a whole lot of theirs too, they fought to the last man, never giving up. Major Shaitan Singh was posthumously decorated with the Param Vir Chakra, Brigadier T.N.Raina who commanded the 114 Infantry Brigade for defense of Chusul was given the Maha Vir Chakra.

The defense of the Alamo has been made into 3 movies and a song written about it.

The Charge of the Light Brigade has been immortalized in Lord

Tennyson's poem and depicted in countless books and movies.

The Battle of Thermopylae has been covered in countless movies(the recent 300), books, video games, poems.

But forget about commemorating Rezang La in books or movies, or poems, many in India are not even aware of it.

Major Somnath Sharma[55]



October, 1947- Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru receives a message from an ex Dy Comissioner in Dera Ismail Khan of the N.W.F.P in Pakistan. The message warns of a mission by Pakistan to send tribal raiders to Kashmir, and some had already moved in. However as the then Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh, still had not signed the Instrument of Accession, Nehru was reluctant to take action. In the meantime, a large number of Afridi, Mahsud, Wazir tribes had begun to enter Kashmir.

Oct 22- Muzaffarbad was attacked and burnt by the raiders. Uri was captured in no quick time, and power station at Mahura was taken over. The whole city of Srinagar was plunged into darkness. Sardar Patel's trusted aide, V.P.Menon rushed to get signature of Hari Singh on the Instrument of Accession, and rushed back to Delhi to attend the meeting.

A very young Sam Manekshaw, was attending that meeting, too and in his own words.

As usual Nehru talked about the United Nations, Russia, Africa, God Almighty, everybody, until Sardar Patel lost his temper. He said, 'Jawaharlal, do you want Kashmir, or do you want to give it away?' He [Nehru] said, 'Of course, I want Kashmir.' Then he [Patel] said: 'Please give your orders.'

Things began to move fast, first troops and equipment were sent to Srinagar. A very young major by the name of S.K.Sinha handled the logistics, and this was his first assignment in Kashmir. And this is what he had to say about the first batch of jawans.

It was indeed inspiring to see grim determination writ large on their faces. They were all determined to do their best, no matter what handicap they had to contend with. I had never before seen such enthusiasm and fervor for duty.

Sinha met an old friend of his Somnath Sharma, who was with 4 Kumaon, and his hand in a plaster. Sharma was given the task of protecting the airfield, and he felt it was not an “active duty” he wanted to be right in the front. Though Sinha tried impressing Sharma on the importance of the airfield, he felt it was not really worth enough for him.

In the next 48 hours, Major Somnath Sharma, would gain fame as the first winner of the Param Vir Chakra, his action in protecting the Srinagar airfield from Pakistani raiders would go down as one of the most famous last stands, and he would die a hero's death on the battle field.

Major Somnath Sharma, born in the Kangra valley of Himachal Pradesh in 1923, came from a family with a military background. His father Major General Amarnath Sharma, was the first director general of Armed Medical Services post Independence. Growing up with his grandfather Pandit Daulat Ram, he would often listen to the Gita and Krishna's teaching to Arjun influenced him a lot. His maternal uncle Capt. Krishna Dutt Vasudev, had earlier died in WWII, defending a bridge in Malaya from the Japanese, while enabling many soldiers to cross over. It was an event that influenced Somnath Sharma, and shaped his values too.

Graduating from the Royal IMA, Somnath Sharma, joined the 8/19 Hyderabad Infantry Regiment as a young lieutenant. He fought in WWII, under Col K.S.Timayya with the British Army. There is a very popular anecdote about him having carried his orderly Bahadur, who was badly wounded on his shoulders. He refused to abandon Bahadur, even when Timayya instructed him saying it was his own orderly he was carrying. Later during Partition, Somnath Sharma, played a role in quelling the communal disturbances with utmost honesty.

Battle of Badgam.

Nov 3, Badgam- The situation was deteriorating fast, the raiders were just a few miles away from Srinagar airport now. L.P. “Bogey” Sen, Brigadier in command of Srinagar immediately sent Somnath Sharma, and his men to Badgam.

2:30 PM, Nov 3-700 strong tribal force, with 2 and 3 inch mortars launch an attack on the Indian forces, Sharma requested Sen to send in reinforcements for the outnumbered army. It was critical, the airport falls to the raiders, Srinagar too fell, and Kashmir would be a part of Pakistan.

The raiders were now attacking from the Western front too, while keeping the jawans occupied at Badgam. On all sides the Indian unit of 50 odd soldiers, was surrounded and outnumbered, by the raiders as well as a Lashkar unit. Realizing the importance of Srinagar airport, Sharma urged his men to fight to the last, as he ran from post to post, even though his men fell. Sharma himself was hit by a mortar shell, and his last words were

The enemies is only 50 yards from us. We are hopelessly outnumbered. I will not withdraw one inch but fight to the last man last round.

By the time the reinforcements came in, the Kumaon unit was overrun, and Major Somnath Sharma, lay dead, fighting to the last. However he ensured that the raiders suffered heavy casualties, 200 of them were killed, and most important, it slowed down their pace. The last man stand by Somnath Sharma and his troops, gave time for the Indian Army to fly into Srinagar, and ensured it would not fall to Pakistan. His sacrifice was not in vain, he had saved Srinagar for India.

Major Somnath Sharma became the first recipient of the Param Vir Chakra, he fought with one arm bandaged, kept off the raiders at bay, and ensured Srinagar airport would not be lost to India.

From the Param Vir Chakra citation.

Major Sharma’s company held on to last position and the remnants withdrew only when almost completely surrounded. His inspiring example resulted in the enemy being delayed for six hours, thus gaining time for our

reinforcements to get into position at Hum Hom to stem the tide of the enemy advance.

His leadership, gallantry and tenacious defense were such that his men were inspired to fight the enemy by seven to one, six hours after this gallant officer had been killed. He has set an example of courage and qualities seldom equaled in the history of the Indian Army. His last message to the Brigade Headquarters a few moments before he was killed was, 'the enemy are only 50 yards from us. We are heavily outnumbered. We are under devastating fire. I shall not withdraw an inch but will fight to the last man and the last round. Major Somnath Sharma and the Battle of Badgam would be one of the most stirring examples of heroism, patriotism and courage under fire.

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